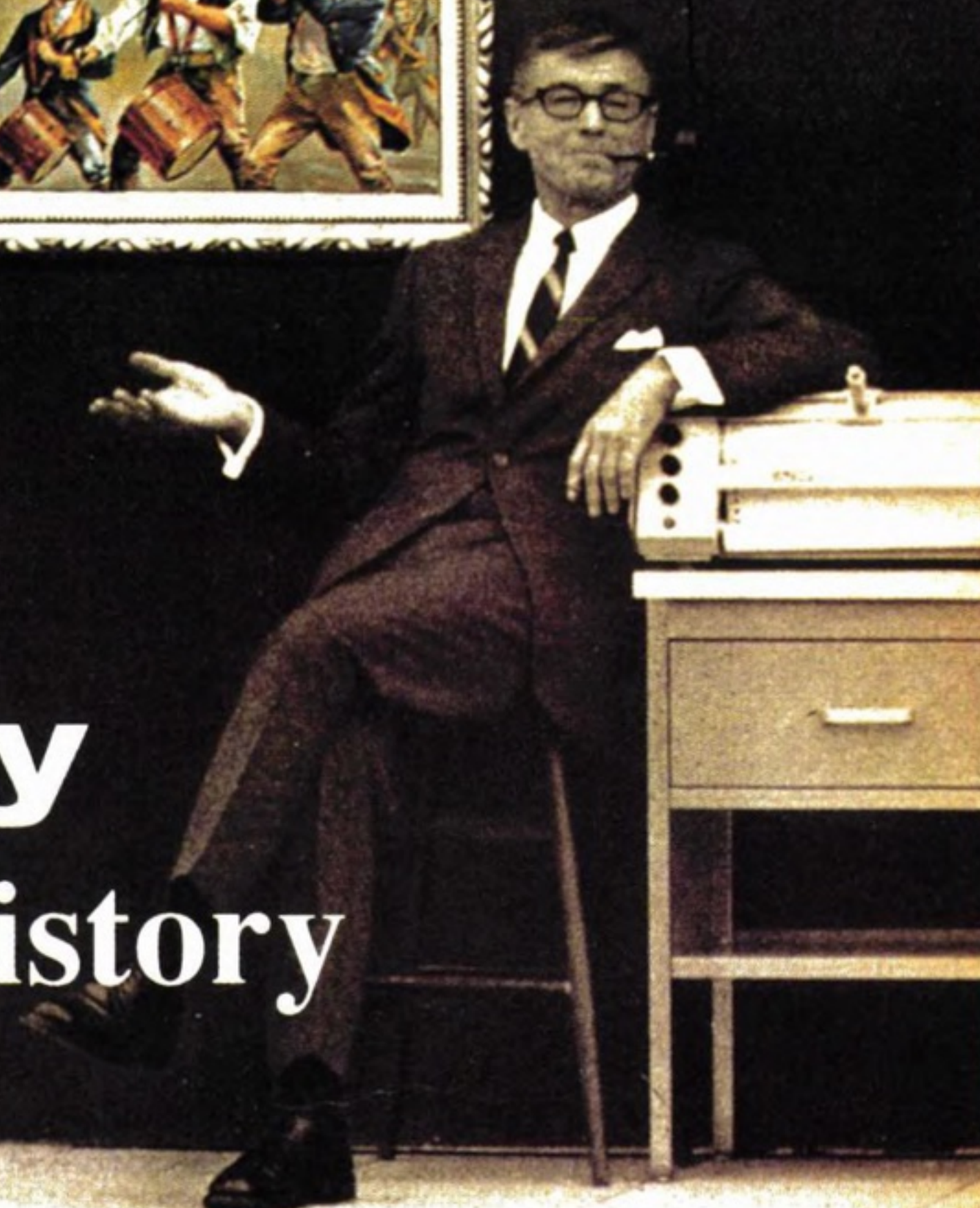




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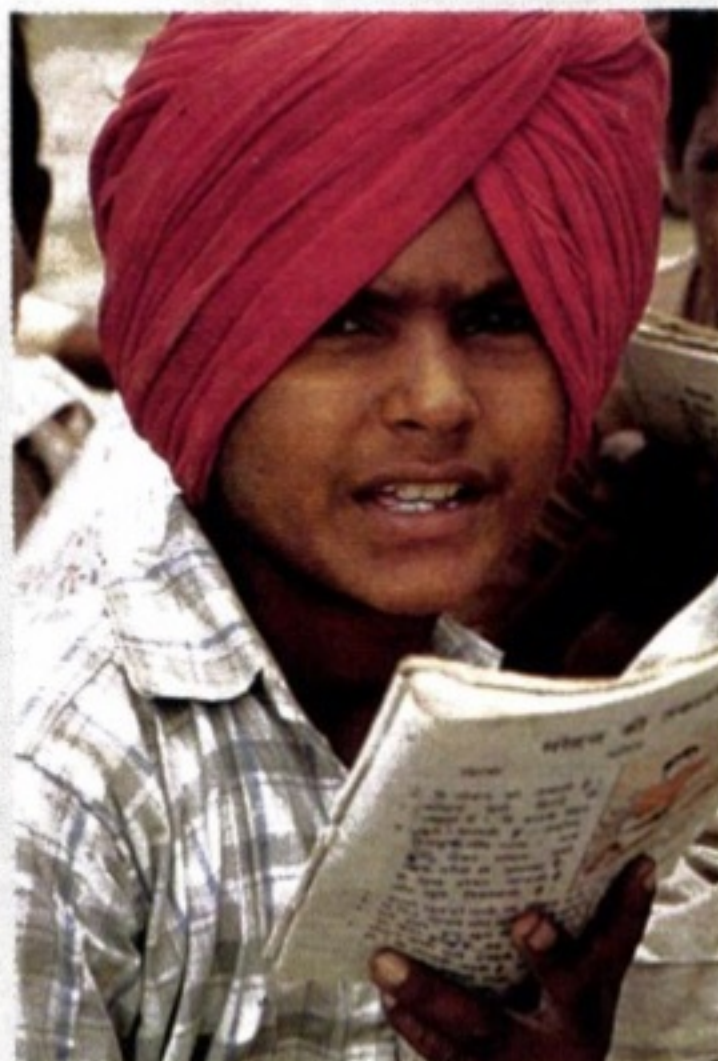
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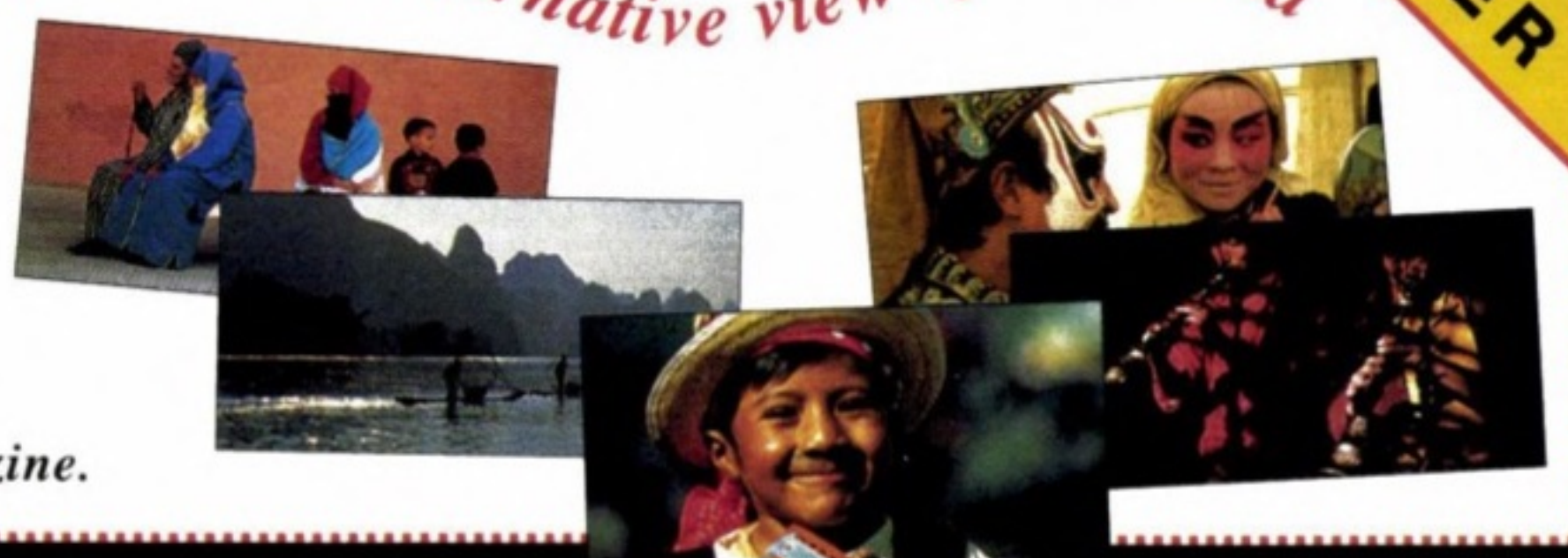


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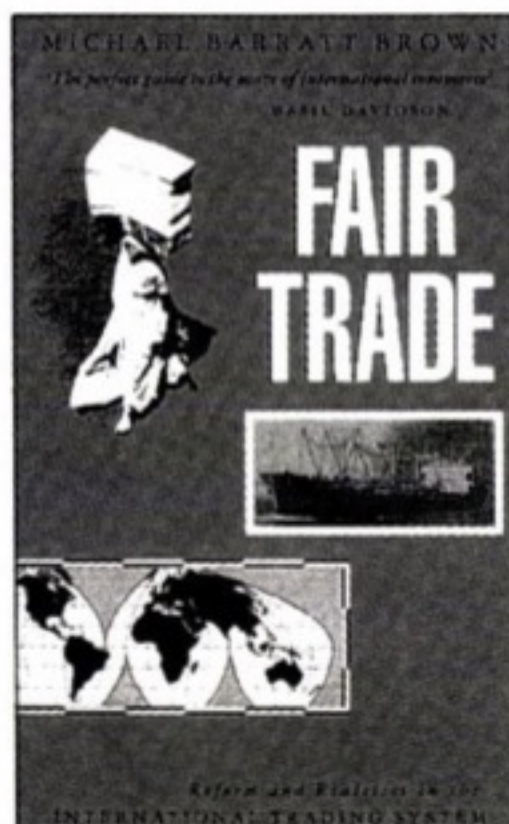


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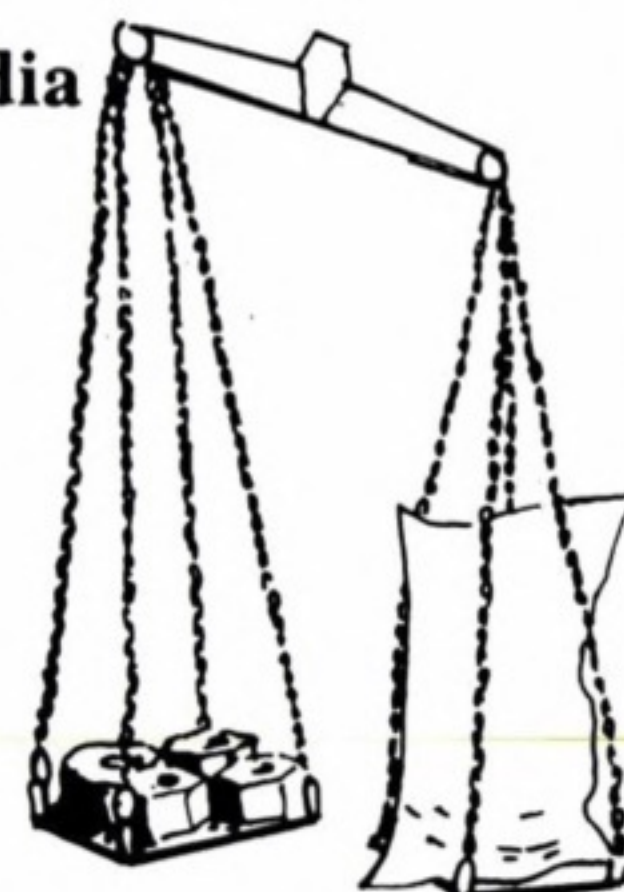
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THIS MONTH'S THEME

History

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

It's hard to believe the Sixties are history. I always assumed that it was still the Sixties – or at least that the decade was so seminal that history could never be understood in quite the same way again. But now there are dozens of books, films and TV shows turning over the bones and artifacts to discover the true meaning of 'peace, love and good vibes'. Hold on a second – these are my bones. My sense of self and society were forged in the Sixties, in youth culture, the Quebec student movement and revulsion over the Vietnam War.

The baby boomers of the Sixties share the fatal conceit of every generation that theirs is a pivotal and unchallengeable role in history – made worse in our case by our numbers and by the heated passions (some would say illusions) of the time. So as part of putting together this issue on the uses and abuses of history I went to a conference entitled

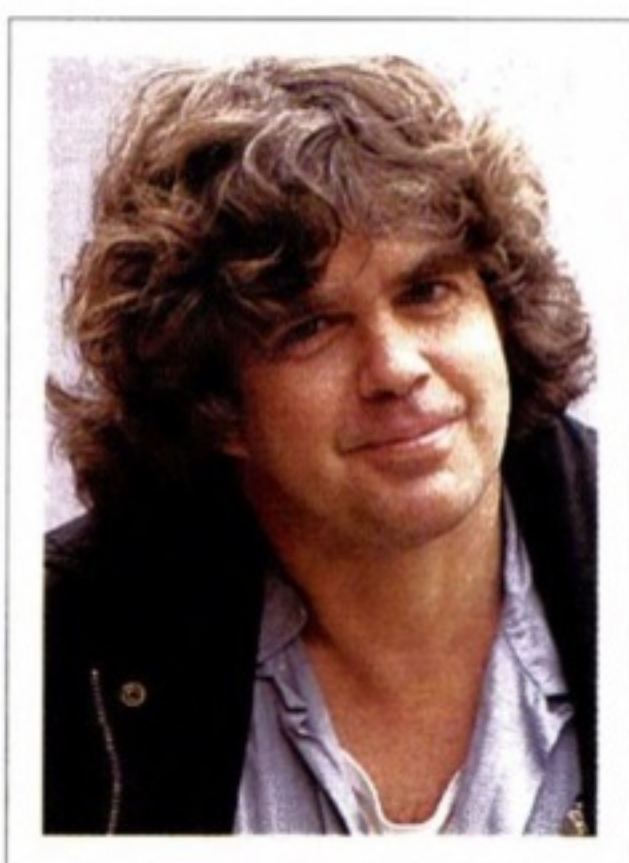
'Towards a History of the Sixties'. I already knew that conservatives saw the decade as altogether too noisy, too intemperate, too unrealistic. In the rigged marketplace of public opinion former radicals like David Horowitz are trying to turn the Sixties into a code word for excess and irresponsibility – for 'living beyond our means'.

At the Conference I ran into a different kind of criticism entirely. Younger activists were quick to point out that celebrating a nostalgic history of Sixties radicalism was simply not good enough. Many felt that they had been living too long in the shadow of the Sixties, forced to relive its myths. One participant, writer LA Kaufman, said that she felt the Conference 'was like coming to someone else's class

reunion'. Veterans of the movement were offering answers that did not seem to fit the questions of their younger colleagues.

It was a painful process to watch. It also posed a central dilemma for me about history. How can the historical experience of one generation be passed to the next without the myth-making and resentment that so often prevents us from seriously coming to grips with the past? This is something we all experience first with our parents and then with our children, if we have them. But it also affects the public realm. A classic recent case here in Canada saw World War Two veterans trying to suppress a National Film Board production by younger directors that revealed uncomfortable truths about the firebombing of Dresden.

Is it possible to respect the space for each generation to 'start over' while giving them the historical raw material to do so effectively? The present is in a profound sense always in the process of becoming history – but handling its transmission is a delicate process fraught with pitfalls. This issue suggests how to avoid the worst of these.



Richard Swift

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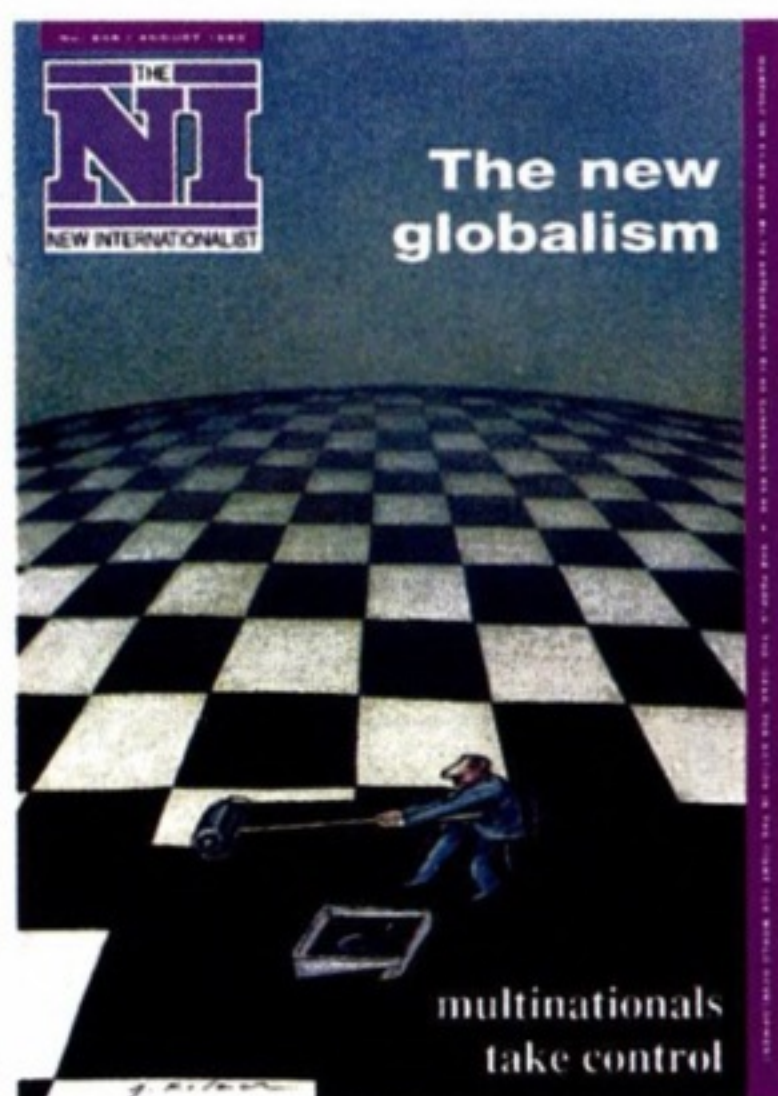
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FRONT COVER PHOTOMONTAGE BY RICHARD SLY

Head in the sand

Your issue on Multinationals (NI 246) was a shallow and biased piece of work. But more importantly it was also irresponsible. I found your hand-wringing over the dangers of the



'global economy' particularly pathetic.

Wake up NI! In case you hadn't noticed 'globalization' is already here. You may not like it but you can't wish it away or stick your head in the sand. Countries and companies that don't prepare for it will end up big losers. Multinationals, to their credit, seem to be the only ones that understand this.

Mario Simpson
Barrie, Ontario, Canada

Catalogue of errors

The catalogue of your recent errors as I see it includes: the wanton puerility of *Starve Trek* (NI 218) and the Debt comic (NI 243). Can they, I wonder, plumb greater depths? Perhaps not, but they can be flagrantly élitist and condescending by criticizing the plebs for so much as aspiring to venture abroad with a whole issue dedicated to abusing the hapless tourist (NI 245). Evidently you have taken on board the 'Deep Green' proposition that travel should be restricted to the 'upper echelons of the Party' – those worthy of the benefit.

And as if that wasn't enough, did you have to lampoon the sincere and considered letter from the Guide Movement with a gratuitously offensive cartoon?

David Limond
Edinburgh, Scotland



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Welcome women

Thank you for your Tourism issue (NI 243). I plan to travel independently later this year and you have strengthened my resolve to reject the exploitative tourist industry and seek a genuine appreciation of the people and places I visit instead. It will be harder but far more rewarding. To help me could you give me the contact address of the Women Welcome Women network you mentioned.

Michelle Virgo
Norwich, UK

Women Welcome Women can be contacted via **Frances Alexander, WWW, 8A Chestnut Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1DJ, UK. Telephone: 0494 439481.** Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Bill on child labour

The Update on the consequences of the US ban on products made by child labour in the Third World (NI 245) is jumping the gun. The Bill to

ban such products is not yet law in the US, nor does it propose a simple ban. The entry ban will not apply if a US importer signs a certificate of origin affirming that they have taken reasonable steps to ensure that the products are not made by children. Isn't that the equivalent of a fair-trade mark for coffee?

The consequences of such legislation are also difficult to judge. Certainly the threat posed by the Bill has made governments and industry, particularly in South Asia, think seriously about enforcing their laws on child labour. They have been encouraged in this by social-action groups who believe that if employers are forced to stop exploiting child labour they will have to offer the jobs to some of the millions of unemployed adults.

Trade barriers to textile imports are a much more serious threat to jobs than the

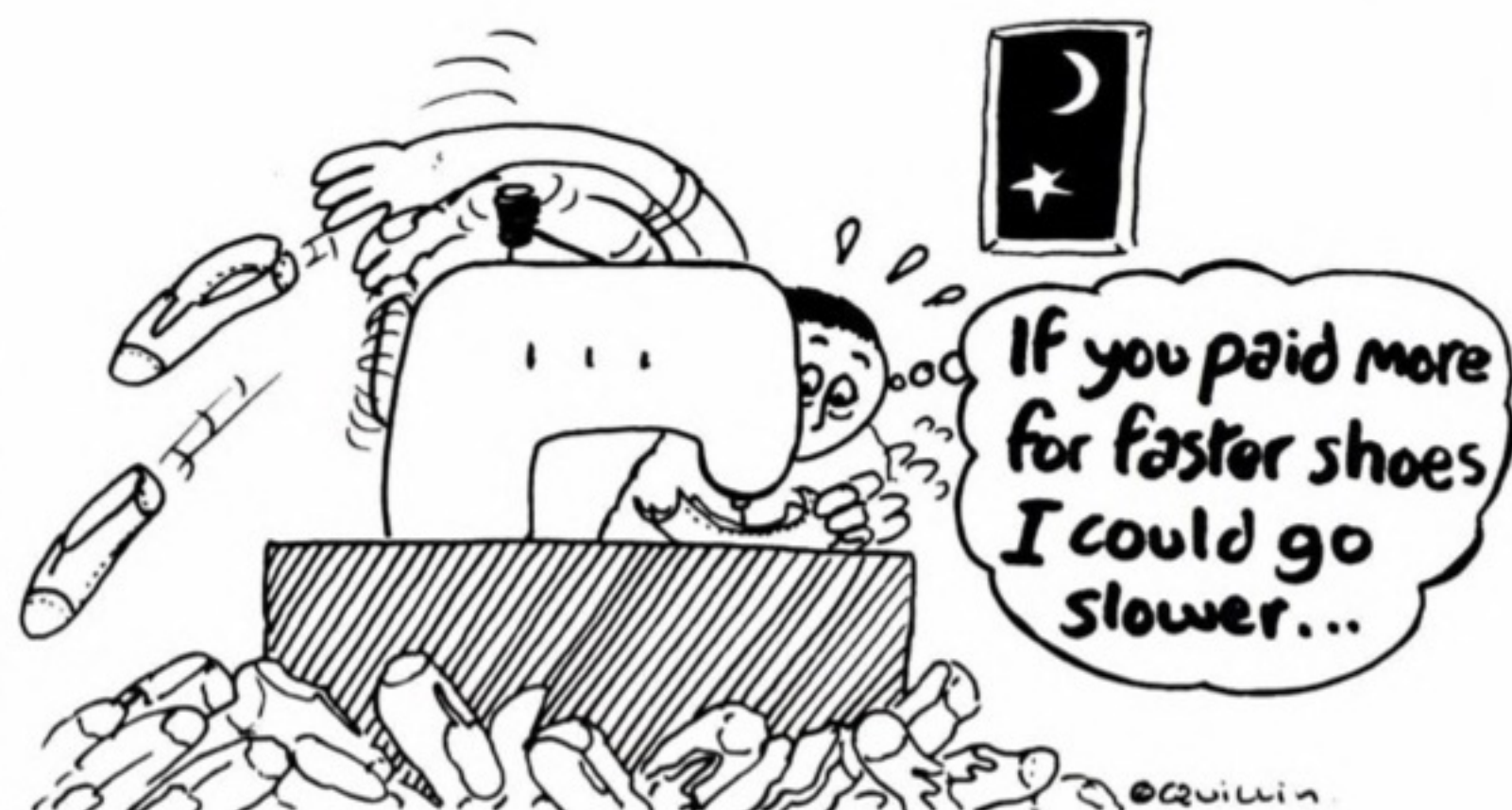
Everyone a winner

I was pleased to see Peter Hinchings' article on the Indonesian sports-shoe industry (NI 244), indicating that human-rights organizations are finally paying attention to this and hopefully other labour issues.

When I did my original research on the production of Nike shoes, I found that the cost to the consumer of paying a realistic living wage to workers would be just 14 cents per pair of shoes! Furthermore, those 14 cents would also mean an end to the 12-hour working day common in these factories, which in turn would create several thousand new jobs!

As Hinchings points out, puppet unions and military intervention make it tough for the Indonesian workforce. But their courage combined with consumer awareness in the West could make everyone a winner. A sentiment I'm sure Nike would endorse.

Mick Blowfield
Enfield, UK



child-labour issue. If this debate raises consumer awareness it can only be good. It seems to us at Anti-Slavery International that if we continue to tell Third World producers that our only concern is price then they will continue to seek the cheapest and most compliant workforce.

David Ould
Anti-Slavery International, London, UK

Human rights denied

Thank you for your interesting and timely issue on human rights (NI 244). It was particularly welcome to see social, cultural and economic rights included as basic to human rights.

However, there was no mention of the fact that these basic human rights are being denied every day to people living in every country in the world including those in the rich West. Mari Marcel Thekaekara wrote in her excellent article 'New World Ordure' that 'the poor have never been a priority. Not now, not ever'. This is as true here in Britain as it is anywhere.

In this context, I would like to draw readers' attention to ATD Fourth World, an international human-rights organization working with people excluded from society because of poverty. It works in over 40 countries.

Kate Evans
Reading, UK

Shocked into what?

I have just read through the combined Amnesty/NI issue (NI 244) and was so disturbed by what I saw that I felt I must write to express my objection. I feel it is totally unnecessary to describe the various human-rights abuses in such detail. It is possible to inform people about these atrocities using generic language.

I suspect that you would argue that you had achieved your objective – to shock us into action – and that we should be presented with the facts however hard they are to swallow. As an active member of Amnesty I do not need to be motivated to carry on by being continually subjected to more and more horrors. As for

the unconverted, do you not think they will just close the magazine in disgust like I did?

Working for Amnesty is one of the most proactive ideological occupations because the simple act of writing a letter makes a definite, albeit minute, contribution to the cause one is targeting. How about reflecting that fact with a bit of optimism in your publications?

Simon Munro
Glasgow, Scotland

Not guilty

Brian Dooley's article on the death penalty (NI 244) contained a pathetic cheap jibe at the Catholic Church. He implied that the Vatican's stand on the death penalty, which he did not quote accurately, was calculated to obtain financial gain for the Church in the US.

This was scurrilous. The Catholic Church is foremost in petitioning heads of state and governments to show clemency. In 1990 the US Bishops' statement on capital punishment stated that the imposition of the death penalty in the conditions of contemporary American society could not be justified. All this could hardly put them in the pockets of the US President.

Maurice Smith
Middlesex, UK

Independent Tibet

I was surprised that no reference was made to Tibet in your recent issue on human rights (NI 244). I also noticed that the maps in it do not show Tibet as separate from China. I believe that where possible Tibet should be shown as a separate and independent country on all political maps. By continuing to show Tibet as part of China we are tacitly acknowledging China's right to an occupation which is not only an abuse of human rights but is also causing environmental damage.

Richard Whitecross
Kirknewton, UK

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.



Hector Cattolica

HECTOR CATTOLICA

The Argentinian graphic artist who created some of the NI's most memorable images died of cancer in early July.

WE were sitting in a crowded, battered Paris café last autumn. The windows had steamed over as the rain came down outside. We drank tea. Hector was showing me a volume of his poems published – and even translated into English – in Paris in the 1960s. I had no idea they existed. Poetry. That was, he said, how he started to use his imagination.

We'd been on a bustling tour of the Latin Quarter, where Hector had lived when he first arrived 30 years ago, a young Argentinian in search of his Italian and European roots. The 'hotel' where the owner took payment in pictures painted by his 'guests' had become an office block. The anarchist bookshop that closed down because customers stole all the books was now a burger bar. Only Shakespeare's, the extraordinary English bookshop which still has beds among the shelves where penniless young writers sleep, remained the same. We talked to an old man – not just the owner but also Walt Whitman's great-grandson, or so he said – who, on discovering Hector was Argentinian, suddenly walked off and didn't come back.

We crossed the bridge to Notre Dame. Hector pointed to the stone reliefs defaced by the Commune – or was it the Revolution? 'That's my trade, like theirs,' he said. He never lost his commitment to justice for oppressed peoples, his hatred for the cruelty of capitalism nor his unique talent for describing his perceptions in powerful, subtle, simple and often beautiful images. We entered the cathedral and suddenly there came an almighty blast from the organ, a great Gothic echo. Neither of us, I think, felt particularly reverential but nonetheless we stood rooted to the spot and caught each other's eye.

We walked on through the old Jewish quarter,

now sporting an entire street of shops selling fancy paper. Beautiful as it was, said Hector, no self-respecting artist would ever pay the price being asked for it. On and on we went, in and out of little shops filled with cheese, jars, Chinese lamps. By the time we arrived at the café I was exhausted. Hector was just getting started.

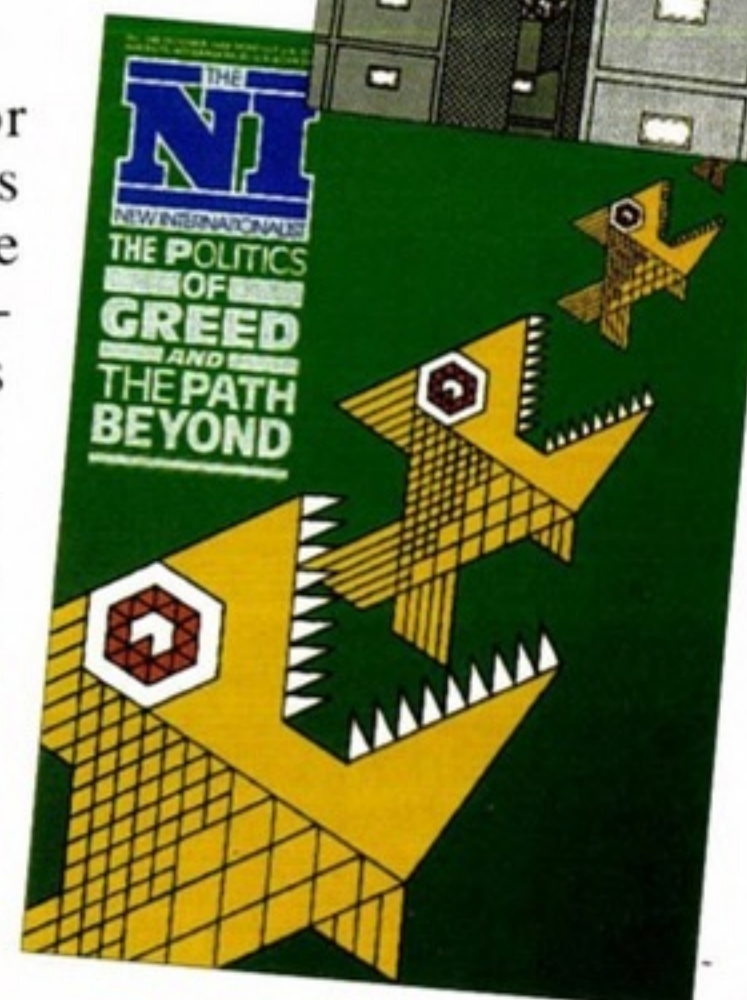
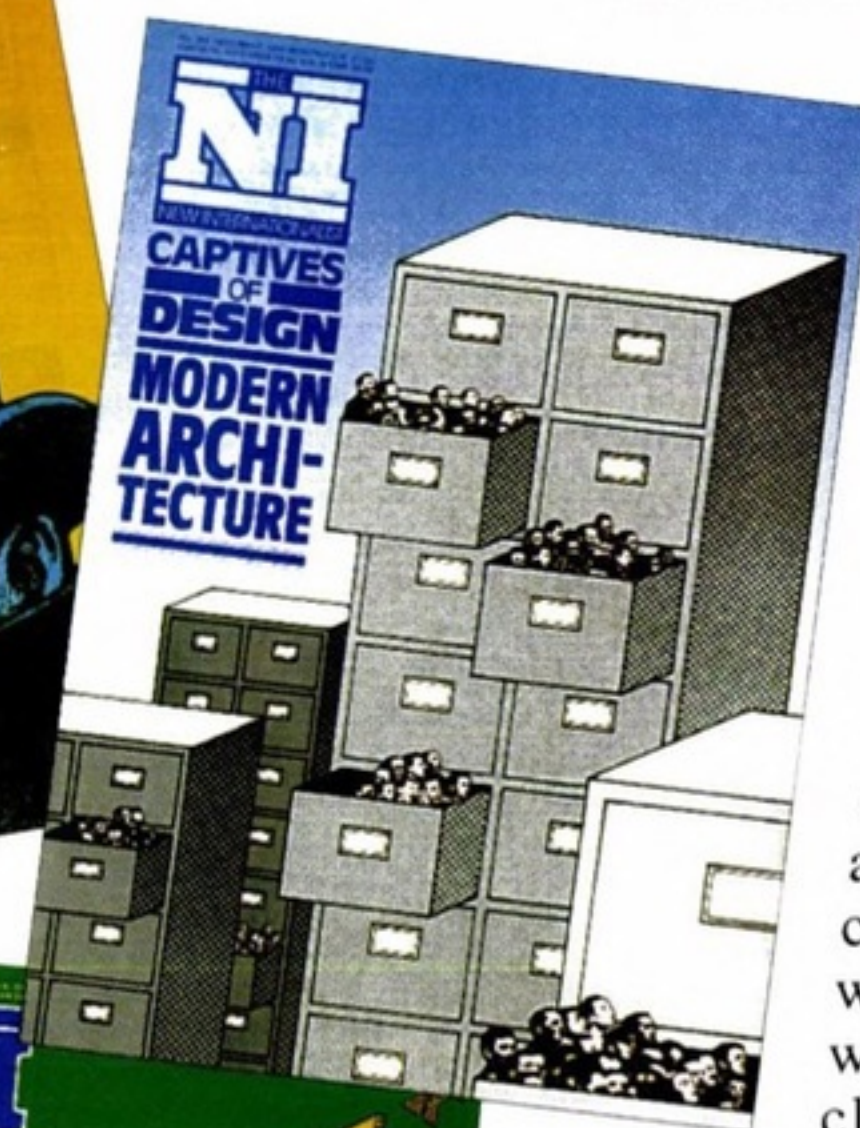
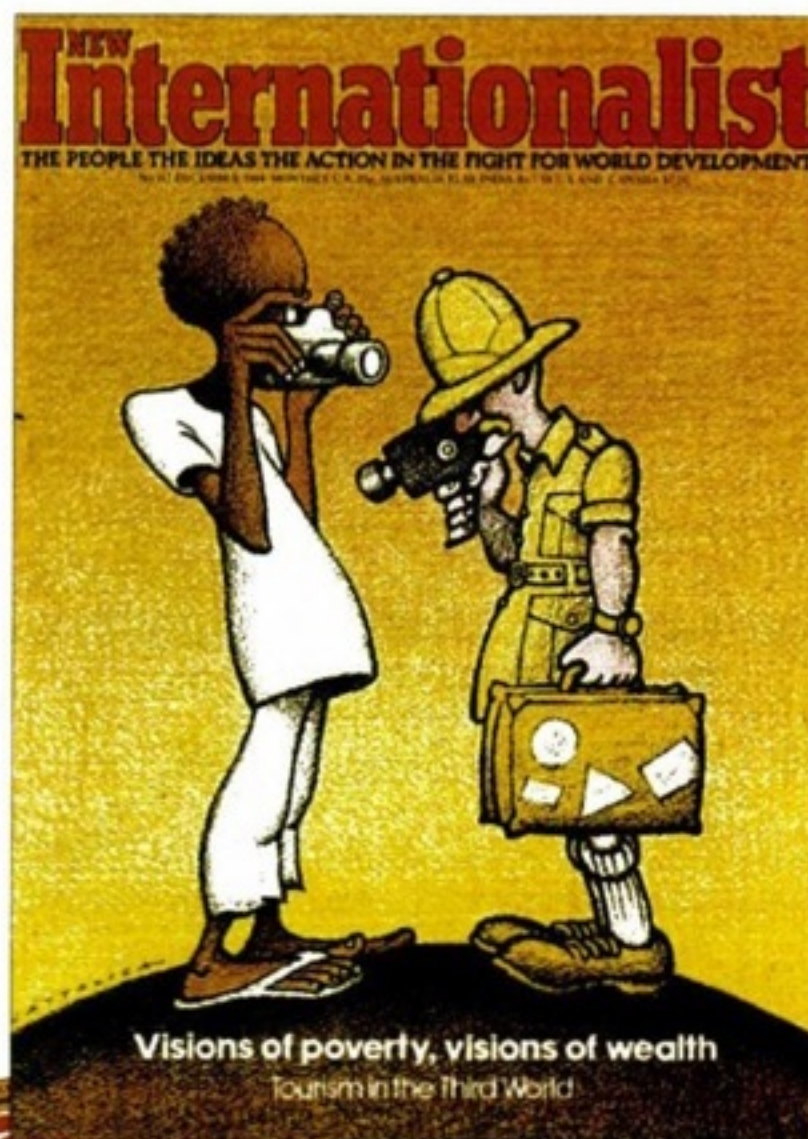
He was, I remember thinking, a little bit like Paris – still going, for better or worse, after all these years. Not long before, his studio had been flooded and he'd broken his working arm, so that he could not draw. A few years earlier a fire had destroyed most of his work. Left behind by technology, he was now taking evening classes with the unforgiving Computer. Knowing that he had never received the recognition due to him I toyed with the idea of trying to put that right, until it began to feel like an intrusion.

We went on to a Spanish restaurant where we ran into a young Argentinian friend of Hector's. This man was some kind of scientist whose job it was to make periodic raids on the Amazon and steal toxic plants

for pharmaceutical companies – 'the real drug barons', said Hector. They were both determined to take issue over something. What they finally settled on was AIDS. Tempers and voices rose sharply. Blows seemed to be on the agenda. From what I could gather Hector was wrong, but he won the argument. I claimed to be falling asleep and he immediately found me a taxi. Back in my hotel the phone rang. It was Hector, checking I'd got back safely.

Knowing that we won't be able to get on the phone to him with some half-baked notion for a front cover or illustration that only he could turn into a strong, original image makes our work that much less intriguing. But we do have a rich legacy of his images. I suspect they will still be seen long after the words we write have faded on the page. ■

David Ransom



Myth and memory

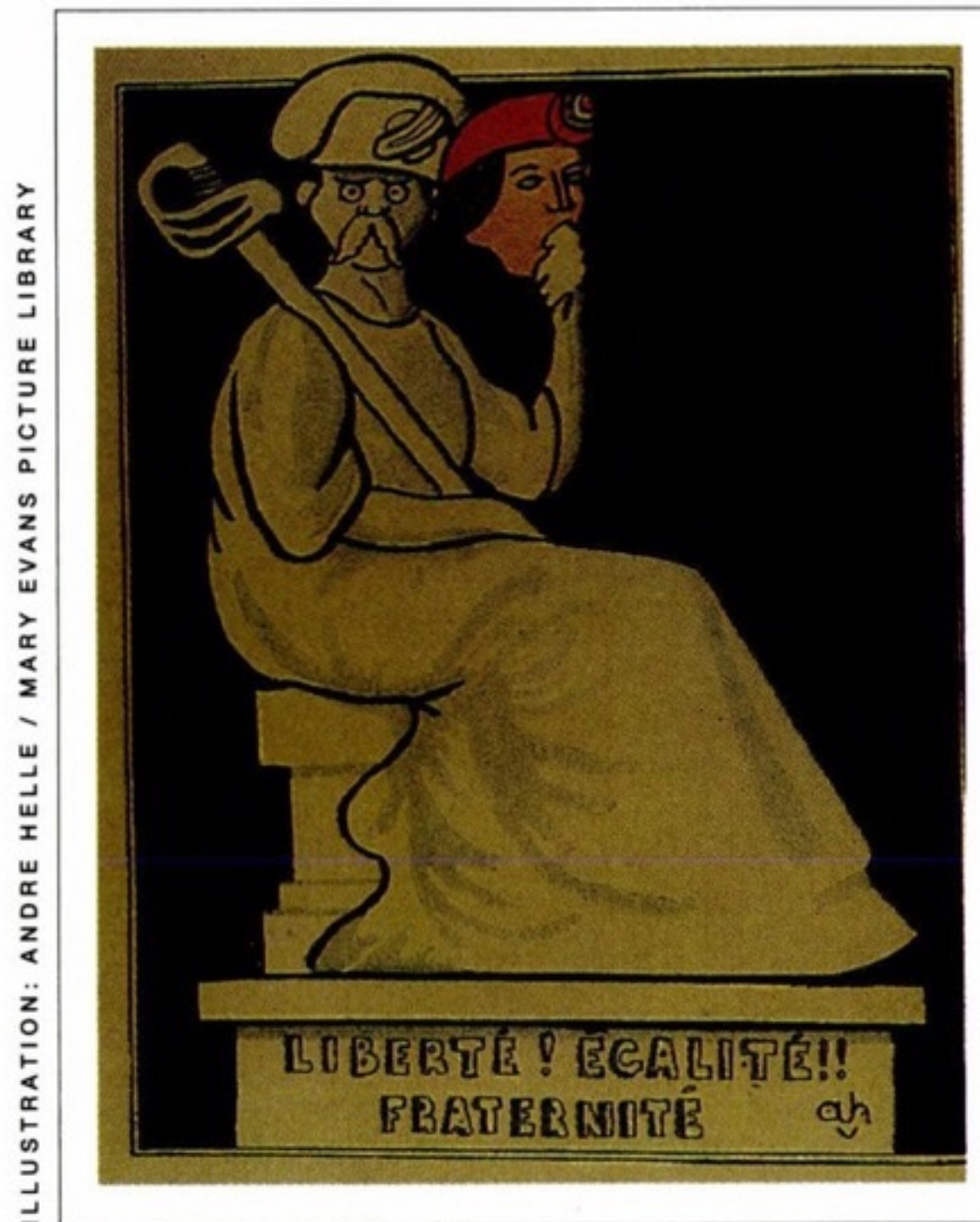


ILLUSTRATION: ANDRÉ HELLE / MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Truth in history is elusive.

Richard Swift argues for a sceptical approach to those who would teach us the lessons of the past.

'REMEMBER the Alamo.' The words ring out with typical Texan abandon. The year was 1836. For 13 days, so the legend has it, 185 brave 'Americans' stood their ground in a crumbling south Texas fort against 10,000 (or was it 15,000? 20,000??) Mexican troops led by the 'ruthless' General Santa Ana. Some remember the Alamo as a battle for freedom; others see it as part of a cynical landgrab. But there is no question which version plays better in San Antonio, where it is the prize tourist attraction, a piece of patriotic heritage mythologized in film by Walt Disney that draws millions every year.

This is history as epic: Mr and Mrs Mainstreet drag their kids past the illustrated legends of Davy Crocket, Jim Bowie,

Colonel Travis and the rest. Entrance is free and it's all maintained at no cost to the taxpayer by The Daughters of the Texas Revolution. In the gift shop you can buy painted plates bearing a picture of the old Spanish fort and the bold inscription 'Alamo: The Price of Freedom'.

As you wind your way along with the crowd past the exhibits you come across a curious quote blown up from an obscure 1939 article in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. The quote relates to an incident said to have happened just before Santa Ana's final assault. Colonel Travis drew a line with his sabre in the sand and said that any man who crossed the line could avoid the final battle. Of course 'not a soldier crossed the line'. How do we know this really happened? The quote from historian

John King Bossetta seeks to put any lingering doubts to rest: 'Is there any definite proof that Travis did *not* draw the line... if not then let us believe it.'

This tells us a lot about history. First about the process of turning moral ambiguities and factual uncertainties into powerful patriotic myths – this of course is not the exclusive preserve of the US, as each nation, church and political party on the globe seems to have its own store of such binding myths. The second thing the quote tells us is that history is not over but rather something we continue to live through or even live down. Witness the Vietnamese peasants who had bombs dropped on them bearing the insignia 'Remember the Alamo'. And if we cannot escape history then we should be pretty sure we know



DAVID SEYMOUR / MAGNUM

Anarchist workers in the Spanish Civil War (top) rejected Christianity's view of history. But it was embraced by nationalists who enlisted Christ in the patriotic cause.

whose version of it we are listening to – so we can figure out what cards they have up their sleeves.

The official version of history is now continually being challenged as groups excluded from it – women, workers, the colonized – point out the traditional biases and tell their own largely untold stories. History, once dressed proudly in the robes of power, is becoming contested ground. Gender history, the hidden history of Africa, native history, oral history, the history of everyday life – all these have shone the spotlight on those parts of the past that official versions preferred to leave in shadow. Over the last three decades there has been a veritable explosion of alternative versions. As a result the official stories

that are supposed to give us meaning are looking more and more bedraggled.

In some key areas – such as the history of the French and English revolutions, the origins of the Cold War, the history of imperialism – alternative views are close to becoming the dominant ones.

The past has traditionally been the preserve of the winners – a way of binding servants to the fate of their masters. This was not the case at the very beginning. Then a sense of the past, still shared by hunter-gatherers from the Amazon to the highland Philippines, was one of human interaction with the life-giving if somewhat whimsical spirits of the plant and animal world. Their sense of what mattered in history was closely bound to ecology and the cycles of the seasons. But as the first states and then empires grew out of the settled agricultural societies of the Middle East, history became instead the stories of priest-kings and how their fates were influenced by various sky-gods. The cyclical version of the past lingered on in the East but in the West it gave way to a more linear idea of the passage of time.

This point of view was quickly hardened by the Judeo-Christian and Muslim religions into belief in a human story revolving around one true God whose 'chosen people' were to carry out his earthly agenda. These philosophies of history were inherited by the modern nation-state which shifted the chosen people onto a secular national stage. Each nation-state had its

own roll-call of leaders and heroes – almost always male and often warriors – Drake, Napoleon, Bolivar; Patton, Alexander, De Gaulle. Historical achievements were passed down by the governing classes to the rest of us. Historically derived and shared values ended up as national myths – the US is the 'freest' country in the world, France the most civilized, the Slavs the toughest people, and so on. Such binding beliefs serve to avoid excessive introspection over who ends up behind bars or the cost of a loaf of bread.

This national historiography came to see all the world through a Eurocentric lens. In the nineteenth century history was rewritten to detach ancient Greece from its Egyptian and Phoenician roots. Golden Greece was celebrated as the glorious childhood of Europe. Yet the split in classical times was between a 'civilized' East (Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia) and a 'barbaric' West (Europe, North Africa). It had nothing to do with the north/south divide later shaped by European colonial expansion. Similarly the histories of Asia, Africa and indigenous America were buried and distorted; their populations turned into 'people without history' upon whom European history could then be superimposed.

You need only stand in the ancient Mayan ruins of Tikal in the Guatemalan jungle, in the holy city of Axum, highland home of Ethiopian Christianity, or in a hundred other such places to feel the weight of this lie. Throughout the Third World, history is being rediscovered and revitalized by both scholars and activists often working from minimal oral and archeological sources. They stand in danger themselves of creating 'anti-imperialist' but highly romanticized versions of the same national myths that continue to haunt Europe. But they have done much to overturn the arrogant assumptions of the West and to challenge the Northern equation of Eurocentrism with progress – the racist core not only of much historiography but of most development theory.

This gospel of progress rooted in the European Enlightenment is the last and maybe most persistent philosophy of history. If you go to Disney World in Florida you can visit the General Electric (GE) Carousel of Progress where they lay it all out for you. Generations of Middle-American nuclear families from the past century or so pass by you on a revolving stage, their lives steadily improving thanks to the latest electrical goodie from GE. Crude but effective.



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

The Alamo at night: history mythologized as national epic and tourist magnet.



PERESS / MAGNUM



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Fine art Egyptian style: nineteenth-century European historians severed ancient Greece from its Egyptian roots.

Our confidence in 'progress' is rooted in a dark mythology of our origins as cave dwellers who led lives that were nasty, brutish and short. But such negative judgments about our ancestors' lives have been challenged recently by historical anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins, whose *Stone Age Economics* paints a very different picture of hunter-gatherers. Their lives were admittedly short but they spent remarkably little time providing for food needs and had much more leisure time than the average industrial working day allows. They also had much greater confidence in the reliability of their survival mechanisms than we have in our own global economy where livelihoods are removed with the stroke of a computer key half a world away.¹

Faith in progress has passed from historical philosophy to become part of the common sense of our culture. But even this belief – held with equal fervour by Darwin, Marx and today's free marketeers – is looking a little tattered. The triumph of classless society seems anything but inevitable. Our growth machine is stalled in ecological quicksand. Genocide and starvation stalk the globe. But maybe a few of us will, with the help of GE, get to the moon before it all comes apart.

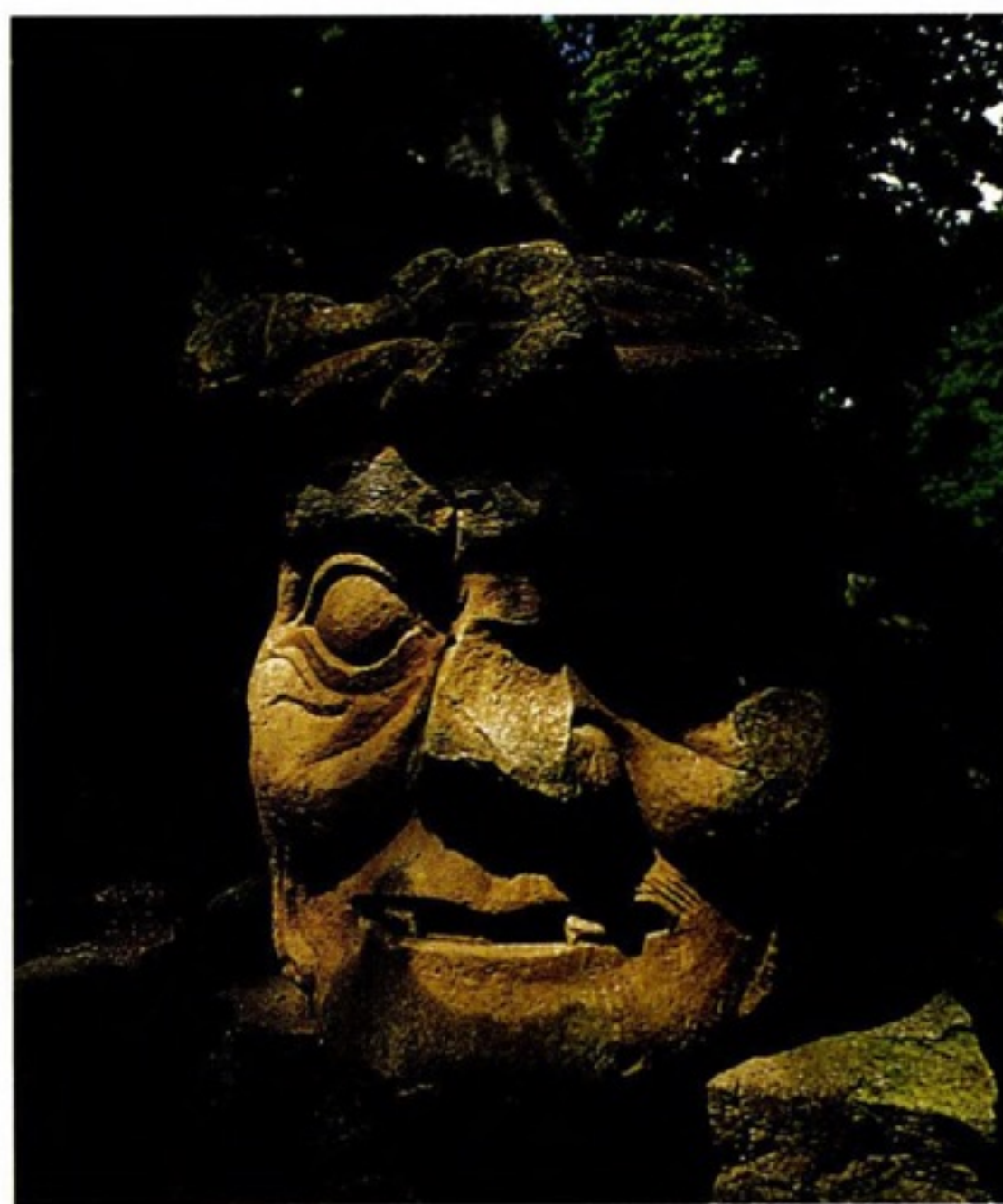
From the vantage-point of the late twentieth century it seems unlikely that history contains any overall destiny for us – unless you are thinking of the astrophysicists' prediction that our sunstar will eventually burn out, torching all biological life on earth. Short of that the grand meanings of national and progressive history seem either self-serving or naive. But this does not mean, as some would have it, that we can do without history. The end of any overarching philosophy of history is being taken as the end of any meaning in history at all.

It is easy enough to sympathize with those who would put far behind them the nightmares associated with history's grand

designs for racial purity, the planned economy, perfect competition or the territorial integrity of expanding nation states. German Jews or Ukrainian peasants, those thrown on the scrapheap of redundancy or sacrificed in East Timor on the altar of a Greater Indonesia: all these would doubtless be happy to consign history's big ideas to the fire.

Yet calling an end to history at this particular point is a bit too convenient. Such an end would ensure the unqualified acceptance of the present notion of 'progress' that history itself was once used to prove. This is the perfect view for a de-politicized consumer society. Indeed historian JH Plumb in his classic essay *The Death of the Past* held that industrial society no longer needed a past which has become for it 'a matter of curiosity, of nostalgia, a sentimentality'.²

Monumental Mayans: ruins buried in Central America's jungles expose the lie that the peoples of the Third World have no history.



THOMAS HOEPKER / MAGNUM

We live in an era addicted to innovation. We are told that evils such as slavery and oppression are products of the bad old days and that, as Jimmy Porter said in John Osborne's famous 1950s play *Look Back in Anger*, there are 'no good brave causes' left to be fought. It is simply a matter of getting the basic formula of modernity right in order to address the minor shortcomings which remain. Engels, another believer in bringing history to an end, called this euphoric state 'the administration of things'. But while history may not have come up with any clear-cut solutions, it has certainly created more problems than this kind of tinkering can hope to handle. And it seems unlikely that a population drunk with futurethink and mesmerized by techno-gimmicks will have the historical bearings necessary to tackle such problems.

The idea that history can disappear is of course absurd. Most people realize this and have a strong instinctive interest in the past. The popular appetite for the subject is amazing: historical bookclubs, romantic novels, period films, theme parks, journals, museums, magazines, the re-enactment of historical events. History – or 'heritage', as the hucksters call it – is big business.

But if the mythologies associated with the 'grand governing narratives' are being banished in the learned circles of the academy they still persist in this popular realm. JH Plumb held out great hopes for critical history: 'the past has only served the few; perhaps history may serve the multitude'. But specialized doctorate theses about the minutiae of stamp taxes or calculations of township population growth will never provide the kind of public engagement needed to challenge the official memory tailored by the powerful. Historians must not shy away from the big questions, even if they don't have all the answers.

The 1980s saw a great fuss by conservative politicians worrying about whether students were being taught the proper 'shared national values' in their history courses. A general counter-offensive against critical education paid special attention to history. A quote from Reagan's education secretary William Bennett catches the flavour of this assault: 'the study of history will give our students a grasp of their nation that... will reveal it is still (in Abraham Lincoln's words) "the last best hope on earth" ... They must know that nations can be destroyed from without, but they can also be destroyed from within.' Bennett understands what Nikita Khrushchev also saw from the other side of the Iron Curtain, where an historical slip could mean a bullet in the head: 'Historians are dangerous people. They are capable of upsetting everything'.³ If history has now escaped the selective tradition of the

powerful it is no wonder they would have it abolished rather than see it serving Plumb's 'multitude'.

It is easy to become obsessed or trapped by history. We should above all never think of it as a sure guide to the future. Wallowing in the 'lessons' of World War Two helped fuel a crippling arms race that brought us to the brink of nuclear destruction. The people of the Third World are still living in a state of militarized poverty as a consequence. Justifying present policies simply by reference to righting histori-

cal wrongs is another dead-end street. It cannot but create a continuing spiral of grievance and revenge such as we see today from Palestine to Sri Lanka.

We still need history – but a history with all its warts and blemishes that does not yield to nationalistic morality plays of good and evil. A history that does not whitewash massacres as 'nation building'. That celebrates not only the grand struggles for justice but also the no-less-heroic adaptations and resistances of everyday life. That is not afraid to look at the hidden histories of

those who have tried to do it differently – utopian communities, religious dissenters, political heretics, sexual rebels and so many others upon whom progress has passed a negative judgment.

We need such history not only for its own sake but also because it gives us a sense of the potential in people. We need to draw on such potential in order to face the future. ■

1 Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Aldine, Chicago 1972). 2 JH Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (MacMillan, London 1967). 3 Harvey J Kaye, *The Powers of the Past* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, London 1991).

Facing history in ourselves

Erica Simmons explores a new method for helping students confront the big issues in history.

ANYONE who is familiar with teenagers will tell you that they are highly conformist, acutely self-conscious and mightily preoccupied with the here and now. Since teenagers are likely to laugh at any adult who suggests that what happened 50 years ago might be worth thinking about, high-school history teachers have a rough job. But a Boston-based organization called Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) has designed a program which takes advantage of teenage traits to teach what might be one of the most difficult historical topics of all: the Holocaust.

The FHAO approach begins by asking students to consider the social forces which shape their lives. How do they decide what to believe and whom to trust? How do they know that they are not being propagandized by their teachers, their government, by television? How do they cope with peer pressure, with prejudice and discrimination? How have they reacted when they've seen or heard something unjust?

By starting with the student's own perception and experiences, FHAO offers them respect and so compels their attention. 'It works because it takes seriously adolescents' capacity to think deeply and to think about disturbing things in a complicated way,' says Toronto teacher Myra Novogrodsky. 'And it plugs into the issues that almost every adolescent is thinking about.'

'Facing History and Ourselves' is as much about moral and political responsibility as about the Holocaust itself. Students may also learn about the genocides in Cambodia and Armenia and about the American civil-rights movement. But teachers insist that their students don't lapse into an easy self-righteousness. Boston teacher Gerrard Kelly explains: 'When kids say "We should have done something about this" I ask "Well, what about the Serbs in Bosnia? Should we stop them? How can we stop them?" Students are forced to insert themselves into history; to understand the choices people made and how individuals became victims, perpetrators, or bystanders.'

'There's a tendency to objectify, to say that it's this or that

person's fault,' says New York teacher Peter Nelson. 'Or they'll say "If I was there, I would have just shot them all up".' Most of Nelson's students are Black or Hispanic and New York has no shortage of racial troubles. 'I always ask: "What about you?" I won't say it's wrong because they won't listen to me. But another kid will say that it is.'

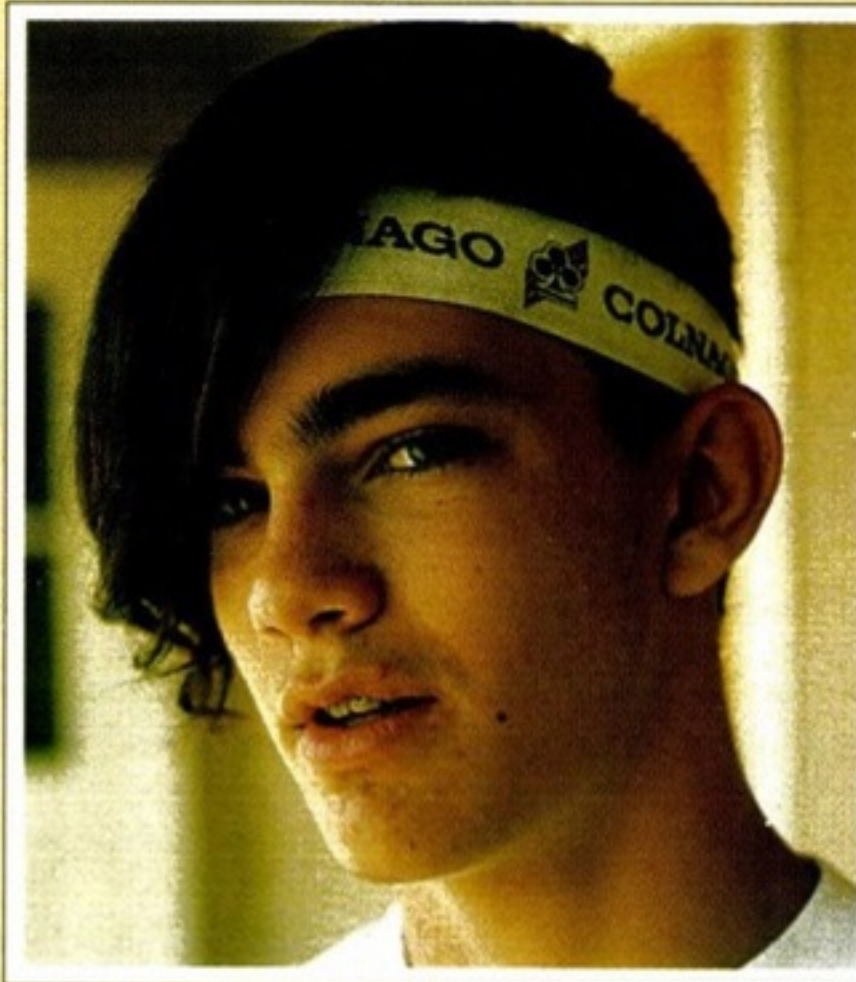
The FHAO program was started 17 years ago by two teachers in the Boston suburb of Brookline. Co-founder Margot Stern Storm believed that 'if you're trying to teach about social justice and democracy, you have to look at how it failed. The whole lesson is to say that history is not inevitable and that the Holocaust could have been prevented.' Since its inception, 30,000 educators have taken the FHAO workshops and each year 500,000 students across North America are taught using the FHAO approach.

For Peter Nelson's students, the Holocaust provides an oblique route to confronting the painful subject of racism in their daily lives. 'I'd tried with the story of slavery and segregation,' says Nelson, 'but for black kids, that history just made them feel like they were victims of the world, that because it kept happening to them they must have somehow merited it. When I started using FHAO they saw that other people have suffered this way too. They could hear the same message without feeling that victim-guilt.'

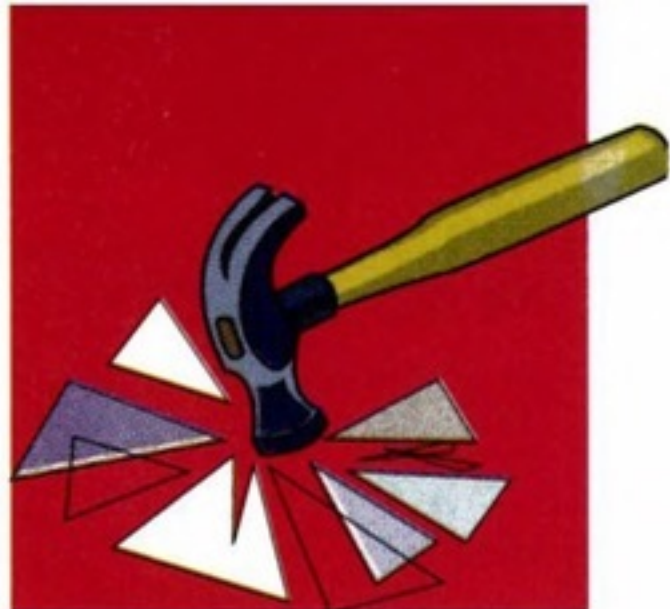
These teachers are passionate about the FHAO program and what it can accomplish. Nelson wants his students to understand that 'the Holocaust is a heavy-duty message for the world – a massive warning siren about the results of racism'. Kelly says: 'I want my students to understand moral complexity. I want them to be challenging the status quo.'

The extraordinary impact of FHAO on both students and teachers is indisputable. Those who have used it in their classrooms have seen what other teachers dream about: intellectually serious and emotionally engaged students who understand that history resides not in facts and dates but in themselves.

Erica Simmons is a regular contributor to the **NI** based in Toronto.



Short memories: today's teenagers need to understand history's life-and-death choices.



KONRAD ERMISCH / MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

The clash of steel echoing down the ages. Serbian leader Milosevic (left) bathes in the glory of Tsar Lazar, vanquished hero of the Battle of Kosovo, (above) whose bones were unearthed to foster nationalist fervour.



ZAJA PICTURES / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

The curse of Kosovo

Branka Magas digs up the roots of Serbian racism in a myth about a medieval war.

THE current slaughter in the former Yugoslavia began under the sign of a myth about a battle fought 600 years ago. In 1389 at the Battle of Kosovo Field a multinational Christian force was defeated by its Ottoman foe. This was part of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire that eventually spent itself at the gates of Vienna some three centuries later. What actually happened in the Battle of Kosovo is a matter of dispute. But its importance to all the people of the region is undeniable: Bosnians, Serbs and

Albanians all commemorate it in their folk songs. Yet it was only the Serbs who turned the defeat on Kosovo Field into a powerful national myth.

This happened in the second half of the nineteenth century when Serbia became an internationally recognized kingdom and was able to contemplate the 'liberation of ancestral lands' – the *sandjak* of Novi Pazar, Kosovo, Macedonia – from Ottoman rule. Since much of this territory was inhabited by non-Serbs, it was necessary to reinterpret the Kosovo battle as an exclu-

sively Ottoman-Serb affair. The aim was to present the Albanians in particular, ethnically dominant throughout the Kosovo region, as usurpers of Serbian historic territory. They were portrayed as a 'people without history': a barbarian tribe genetically incapable of cultural or political development. Serb-Albanian conflict was thus built into the very foundation of the Kosovo myth. Indeed, from its early days the Serbian state practised a policy of mass expulsion and/or forced assimilation of non-Serb populations, thereby turning an

ethnically heterogeneous region into a homogeneous Serb one.

The Kosovo myth is a textbook case of how national history is often reinvented in response to contemporary political needs. It implies that Serbs were the original masters of this part of the Balkans and that their great empire (itself actually fleeting and multinational in character) was extinguished on Kosovo Field. The reconquest of Kosovo, by implication, was not just a matter of revenge for the past, but a precondition for the very existence of the Serbs as a free people.¹

The mythical reworking of the Kosovo battle also ignored the fact that the Ottoman side included the Sultan's Christian vassals, some of them ethnically Serb – the conflict was presented instead as one between Christianity and Islam. And the strongly religious character of the Kosovo myth is what separates it from other national myths developed in the region during the nineteenth century.

According to the 'classic' Serb version, the defeat on Kosovo Field had a spiritual cause: Tsar Lazar's conscious preference for a 'heavenly' rather than an 'earthly' empire. His choice made the Serbs by extension into a 'heavenly' people, a people chosen by God. The Serbian Orthodox Church survived the ensuing centuries as the only Serb national institution in both Ottoman and Habsburg lands. Other key components of national integration – such as codification of the vernacular as the printed language, or political independence – were acquired by the Serb nation only in the nineteenth century.

The Serbian Church was thus a state in embryo – a spiritual state in anticipation of a secular one. Whereas in Russia the church always remained subordinated to the secular authorities, in the Serbian case the church substituted for the state, preparing the ground for its eventual rebirth. When the multifaith state of Yugoslavia came into existence at the end of World War One the Church remained the most jealous guardian of Serb state and nation, imparting a strongly mystical dimension to Serb nationalism that has even survived modernization. It is here that critical intellectuals in present-day Serbia have found the seeds of Serb fascism.

Yugoslav nationalism took over the spiritual aspect of the Kosovo myth. Yugoslav nationalists hailed the creation of the south Slav state as an historic revenge against the original defeat in Kosovo and as an affirmation of the state's divine origin. Here is how the prominent sculptor Ivan Mestrovic, ironically a Croat, rendered the Kosovo myth way back in 1915: 'Kosovo is a crown of thorns borne by the suffering Yugoslav nation... There, on Kosovo, its Tsar spoke to God the night before the bat-



Srebrenica: Muslim survivor of a war fuelled by historic grievance.

tle and chose the heavenly kingdom as the only eternal empire, thus making himself and hence also his people eternal... Only one soldier of this holy army remained, his eyes gouged out by the Turks. This far-sighted blind gusle-player... set off among his enslaved people, preaching to them that justice is gained not by arms but by sacrifice and repentance... and the whole of the Yugoslav nation has become Tsar Lazar's soldiers.'²

In 1986, a year before Slobodan Milosevic came to power, the Kosovo myth resurfaced to mobilize Serbs for an all-out conflict with other Yugoslavs. Tsar Lazar's bones were dug up and carried in procession through the cities and villages of Serbia, where they were waited upon by Communist functionaries. Several hundred prominent intellectuals signed an anti-Albanian petition, in which the aggressive content of the Kosovo myth was revealed to the full. The Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences produced a notorious memorandum, which in essence was nothing but a revamped version of the myth. It was a call to arms against the racial Other – the Albanian Barbarian, the Muslim Infidel, the Ustasha Croat, the Slovene Servant of Austria, the Turncoat Montenegrin – behind whom stood 'century-old' enemies such as the Vatican, Lenin with his policy of national equality and of course the 'decadent' West. All were charged with the attempted murder of the Serbs: genocide became the most frequently used word in Greater Serbian agitprop.

The crowning event was a mass rally organized in June 1989 to celebrate the

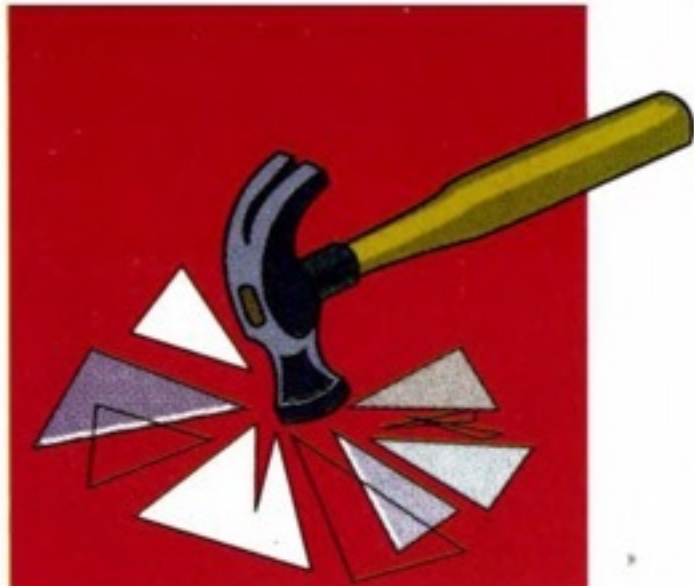
600th anniversary of Kosovo Field and held on the original site of the battle. Milosevic, flanked by generals dressed in the uniforms of the Yugoslav People's Army – an army born in a national liberation war meant to liberate Serbs and Yugoslavs from the Kosovo curse – announced his readiness for war against other Yugoslavs.

In this latest attempt to 'right the wrongs of Kosovo' the Serbian state started to prepare its army and its people for a war of territorial aggrandisement. Some of its conquests took place even before the actual war began, while Yugoslavia was still formally in place. Between 1987 and 1990 Serbia imposed its rule on three of the other seven members of the Yugoslav Federation: Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo. As for the rest, Slovenia was attacked frontally in June 1991, Croatia in August of the same year, Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992. Only Macedonia has so far escaped unscathed. Serbia's wars in Croatia and Bosnia quickly revealed its true aims: the destruction of these states and the expulsion of all non-Serbs ('ethnic cleansing') from conquered territory. The original charge that the Other was intent on destroying Serbdom turned out to be a simple case of displacement – an outward projection of the government's own murderous designs.

This is a war driven by obsession not reason. Two years after its inception it has lost all meaning beyond its self-perpetuation. What will follow, even in the event of victory? This is a question to which the Serbian regime has no answer. Winning has become as dangerous for it as losing. Six centuries after Kosovo, Serbia is fighting another lost war. The Kosovo myth has turned out to be not just an irresponsible adventure, but the nemesis of modern Serbia. In the view of the democratic opposition, the war amounts to Serbia's historic defeat. As Bogdan Bogdanovic, ex-mayor of Belgrade and an early opponent of Milosevic, said in the summer of 1991: 'Serbia has lost this war. When I say "this war", I am thinking not only of the current one, but of all our modern wars and our entire modern history... A feeling of failure lies at the very heart of Serb nationalism... This history gambled away – a century and a half gambled away – is what can be described as a lost war.'

Branka Magas is a Croatian-born expert in Balkan politics based in London. She is the author of *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, Verso 1992.

¹ For the power of this myth among Serb peasants-turned-soldiers during the Balkan Wars see the account given by Leon Trotsky in his *Balkan Wars 1911-12*, New York 1980. ² Quoted in Miroslav Krieza, *Deset krvavih godina* (Ten bloody years), Zagreb 1957. During the War, Mestrovic was an active campaigner for the unification of Yugoslavia.



Temple wars

*If you're a fundamentalist in search of popular passion, you could do worse than reshape history to suit your own ambitions. **Rehan Ansari** analyzes the success of India's Hindu extremists in blotting out a more tolerant past.*



ILLUSTRATION: WALTER MOLINO / MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Memories of slaughter at the time of Partition (left) have been revived by Hindu fundamentalists to justify the attack on the Ayodhya mosque (below).



TEIT HORNBACH / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

IN one short season of violence last year Babri Masjid, in the north Indian town of Ayodhya, became the most famous mosque in the world. Witnessing the violence of young Hindu men in their fashionable city clothes as they destroyed the mosque was remarkable enough. Yet even more remarkable was the brazen rewriting of the past which justified the destruction. The ideologues of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of India, and the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan for that matter, demonstrate a flair for myth-making that would make the most fashionable French deconstructionist proud.

Unfortunately the play of fundamentalist imaginations has tragically concrete consequences. The violence has spread to Bombay and Calcutta; in Bombay alone the official toll of deaths in only the first two months of this year came to 2,000. As news of the destruction spread so did incidents of

temple burnings and physical violence in neighboring Pakistan, in the Gulf Emirates and in England. Wherever there are Hindu and Muslim communities there is unease and, worse, an entrenchment of particular views on the history of Hindu-Muslim relations.

The BJP champions a version of history that claims Indian Muslims to be interlopers, descendants of temple-destroying invaders, one of whom, the Mughal emperor Babar, built a mosque on the birthplace of Ram in Ayodhya. This interpretation breaks up on the rocks of a few inconvenient facts. First, most Muslim conversions occurred among the lower castes, conversions inspired by Sufi saints – an image more evocative of wandering minstrels gaining a following than of sword-wielding sultans intimidating the populace.

Second, Babar certainly did not build the

mosque in Ayodhya, which is simply not that old. Nor is it clear that it was built by the deliberate ruin of a temple. No reputable historian would fix a birthdate for Ram, and most of the other temples in Ayodhya lay claim to the honour of being his birthplace.

When people think of the history of Hindu-Muslim relations in the subcontinent buzzwords like 'ancient hatreds' come easily to the lips. The demolition of a mosque by Hindu mobs is understood as a natural consequence of unrelenting, age-old enmity between the two groups. After all, British India broke up amid great slaughter into independent Hindu and Muslim majority states in 1947.

But there is more than one history of Hindu-Muslim relations. At Nizam-ud-din

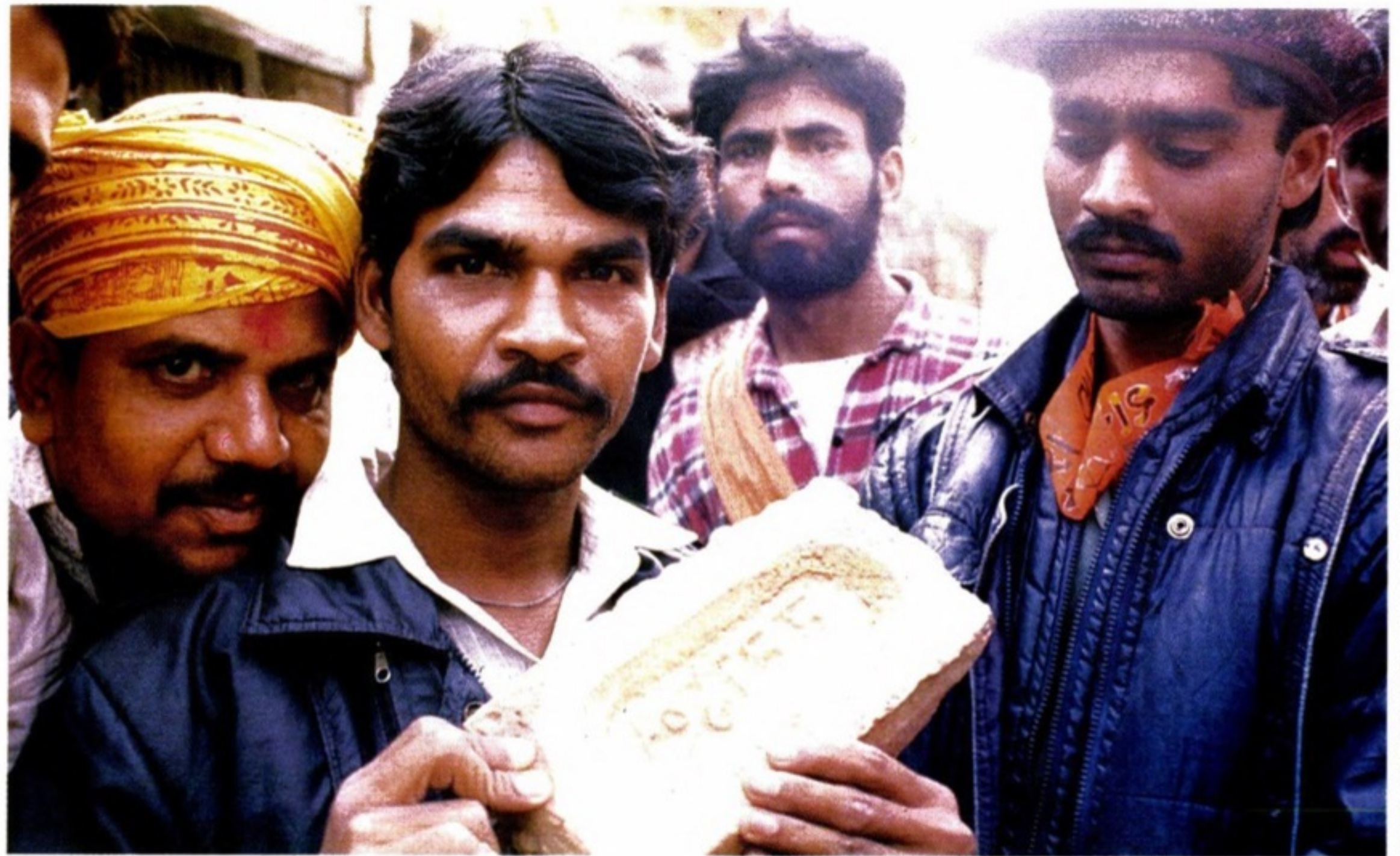
Auliya's *mazar* in Delhi, crowds of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims pay homage to north India's most famous saint – a great Sufi Muslim poet of the thirteenth century. Hang around in this festival space, and you will – like any other stranger – obtain free food and lodging for the asking. You will learn of a different Islam in the subcontinent, one of poetry and the music of love, sung by Sufi poets. Northern India is dotted with Sufi mazars like this one, frequented by people of every creed and caste. The world now knows that there was once a Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and that now there is a Ramjanmabhumi temple. But for most of the site's history a mosque and a temple co-existed there.

The idea and history of Islam-as-music, as a call to love spread by Muslim poets who absorbed Hindu yogi practices, and whose convertees did not relinquish their pre-Islamic culture, could hardly be more contrary to the puritanical Islam spread by the swords of Turkish Sultans and Mughals from Central Asia. Historically both forms of Islam have occurred in the subcontinent. It is a matter of personal value which one cherishes.

Hinduism too has many conflicting histories. Only since the last century has there been Hinduism as such. 'Hindu' was a word used by outsiders to describe a place and people – not an institutionalized religion. The people who actually lived in this part of the world were followers of various saints, such as Shivites in Tamil Nadu and Vaishnavites in Gujarat and Bengal. The representations of Ram, hero of the *Ramayana*, used to vary greatly from region to region. But the many *Ramyanas* have now become one. In early 1987 an 18-month-long version of the *Ramayana* ran on prime-time TV. The most popular programs ever shown in India, they represented an important step towards standardizing Hinduism for national consumption.

A couple of months after the *Ramayana* mega-series the Vishnu Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) called on Hindus throughout India and the world to make holy bricks for the construction of a temple at Ayodhya. Bricks came from as far away as Vancouver, Canada and Durban, South Africa. Construction was deferred until after the national elections of 1989, in which the BJP captured 86 seats, compared with the two they had won in 1984.

Who does the BJP appeal to by its history-making? The young Hindus clamoring over Ayodhya mosque are part of the educated urban unemployed, children of the established Hindu middle classes. In an India of rising expectations and rapid economic liberalization, social mobility is challenging a severely hierarchical society. The 'Backward Castes' have traditionally been tied to the land; enriched by the Green



JANE SCHREIBMAN / IMPACT VISUALS

Bricks of faith. Hindus from all around the world sent bricks to build a temple on the site of Ayodhya's mosque.

Revolution, their demands for affirmative action in the handing out of government jobs have increasing force. And middle-class Hindus, whose traditional literacy has let them virtually monopolize such jobs, stand to lose.

On top of this, since the mid-1970s many Indian Muslims have struck gold with jobs in the Middle East. By far the largest portion of India's guest workers in the Middle East are Muslims. With the money they send back home their relatives can afford houses, mosques and business capital – not to mention conspicuous consumption. Traditionally found at the lower rungs of the social and economic ladder, Muslims' new-found prosperity breeds resentment among the established classes.

The report of the Mandal Commission brought many of these tensions to a head. The Commission, which sought to increase lower-caste quotas in government jobs, drew a hysterical reaction from the young literates of the Hindu upper classes. VP Singh's minority government drew support from parties of both the left and the right, including the BJP. Fearing Singh's attractiveness to 'Untouchables', lower-caste Muslims and other minorities, the BJP leader, Lal Krishnan Advani, set out on a 10,000-kilometre *yatra* (pilgrimage) to arrive at Ayodhya for the proposed construction of a temple to Ram. Advani's eventual arrest successfully shifted the ground from Mandal to *mandir* (temple); when the BJP withdrew support the Singh Government fell and violence intensified.

It is useful to compare the success of the BJP with the failure of its Muslim mirror-image, the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan.

Both these visionary parties claim the high ground of change, of a future incorruptibility and progress. The leadership of both parties hails from the other side of the border and is thus rooted in the brutal experience of the 1947 Partition.

As Salman Rushdie says, refugees crossing borders don't carry all their baggage in their bags. The Jamaat wishes Pakistanis to believe their country was created to be an Islamic state and not just a country in which the majority of citizens happen to be Muslim. The Jamaat advocates an Islamic agenda for everything from gender and culture to economics.

But the Pakistani state is only 45 years old so it is hard for the Jamaat to mythologize its origins in the mists of time. The Jamaat actually predates Pakistan by more than a decade and originally opposed the country's formation. It is Pakistan's oldest political party and yet it has under 10,000 members. The Jamaat has performed spectacularly badly in every Pakistani election to date – its fundamentalist ideals just do not appeal to Pakistan's many caste and ethnic groups.

It is not only because India is older than Pakistan that the BJP's retelling of old stories is more effective. The Jamaat loses because it does not dabble in either a caste-drenched mythology or even the slightly less pernicious politics of ethnicity. Yet if the BJP's political manoeuvring succeeds, they will not have achieved some ancient destiny or vanquished old foes. Theirs is a modern politics with a highly modern agenda.

Rehan Ansari is a Pakistan-born journalist who now lives in New York.

Simply ... how history has been hijacked



National destiny

NATIONALIST chauvinism is perhaps the main distortion of historical understanding all over the world. It's an old story – my country right or wrong. For all too many historians their own countries have a special destiny and represent superior values to their devious and barbarous neighbours.

Double standards abound. The English attack the excesses of the French Revolution but prefer to forget they also executed a king. The French blame the English for the persecution of Joan of Arc – forgetting the complicity of their own Catholic Church. Jewish history talks of the struggle to be free of the evil Pharaoh but gives short shrift to the Hebrews' own massacres and conquests. US history, meanwhile, is one of expanding human rights and freedoms – except for natives, blacks, radicals and small countries in Central America.



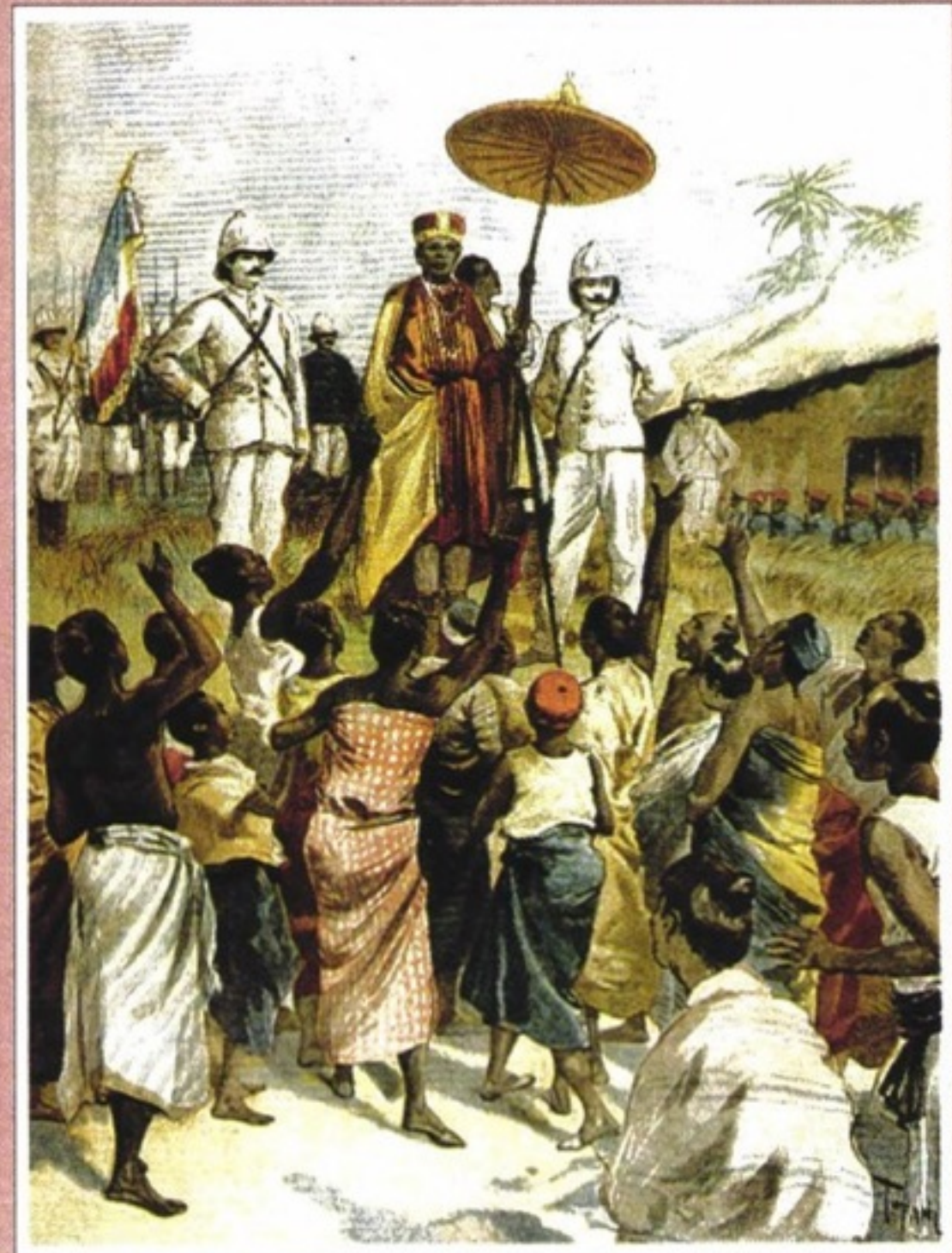
The good old days

THIS is a potent myth going back to the story of the Garden of Eden. The idea of a lost 'golden age' is particularly appealing to the old and those displaced from positions of wealth and power. The appeal often lies in the clarity and stability of the former age: when women and servants knew their 'place' and the prerogatives of empire were unchallenged; when there were still 'family values' and respect for authority. But as these examples imply, one person's good old days were another person's nightmare.

This kind of nostalgia fuels a fundamentalist reading of history: an era of true belief (Victorian England, the natural authority of the Tsars, the 'right-thinking' caliphs of early Islam) can be returned to by rooting out the immorality of the decadent present. This can be tricky. Real things are lost in the course of history: the destruction of community and commons by the Industrial Revolution, for example. But appreciation easily gives way to idealization.

Manufactured tradition

TRADITION cloaks the powerful and their institutions in the robes of respectability. But these are often skin deep and of quite recent vintage. A plethora of patriotic symbols created to inspire mass loyalty – flags, national anthems, equestrian statuary – date only from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Such traditions were even exported to Africa, where elaborate British, Portuguese and German rituals of imperial monarchy were fused with African symbols. Favoured tribes were encouraged to create 'tribal traditions' of land tenure, political authority and customary law which did not exist in pre-colonial Africa – and worked to the detriment of women, youth and people from other tribes. A relatively fluid set of pre-colonial identities was frozen by rigid 'traditions' that Africa still suffers from to this day.



Conspiracy theory

A TIME-HONOURED view of history that ascribes society's misfortunes to the plotting of Catholics, Jews, Communists, Freemasons, Capitalists or what-have-you. This idea is particularly popular with the Right in general and fascists in particular, who see the world as controlled by a vast network of unlikely conspirators. According to works like the fantastical *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Jewish bankers and atheist communists made common cause to promote oppression, cultural decadence and race-mixing. Modern fascists like British historian David Irving spill a great deal of ink to convince a sceptical world that the Nazi



concentration camps were a public-relations invention of these same Jews and leftists. The Cold War playground of spies and subversives provided excellent raw material for the eager conspiracy historian. But this type of history easily gives way to gossip: less dramatic notions such as economic interests and political influences explain super-power behavior better.



Can memory survive the storm?

The Chinese emperors, Stalin, Hitler: throughout the ages those in power have tried to reshape human memory. David Watson fears that TV and consumer culture are succeeding where others failed.

MOST of my life has been spent in the inner city of Detroit, a place both like and unlike many others in the industrialized world. I still live in the neighborhood where I did my growing up, attended school, met and married my wife. Despite the urban desolation, I'm tied to the place; even after long sojourns abroad, I always return to the same few square blocks. Our house looks out on land that was gradually cleared of buildings after the 1967 black rebellion and the city's economic decline in the 1970s. In the Sixties it had been a thriving community of poor whites and blacks, students and young radicals. I found the local anti-war committee, a friendly poor people's diner, communes, poor churches, and a sense of community there.

Like so many of the decade's dreams, the neighborhood was demolished. It left a fascinating miniature urban wilderness of great old trees, wildflowers mixed with perennials where once there had been gardens and a rich bird habitat. Eventually this green place was also flattened and a typically ugly housing development constructed in its place. Recently the builders returned to the section directly across from us. In a few days it was fenced and all the trees were smashed. Expensive condominiums, almost completed, are being leased at rents well beyond the means of most locals. Our view of a park and the sunset is blocked. Someone is getting elegant, sterile housing and someone else is getting rich, but our lives seem incrementally poorer.

Such things happen all the time, happen everywhere. One might wonder what they have to do with history and its abuses. I think that in a small, perhaps obscure way, our experience is like that which many people have had walking down a familiar street and realizing some landmark is missing but not quite remembering what. It is for me emblematic of the disappearance of memory which is occurring relentlessly



ILLUSTRATION: RICHARD SLY

around the globe. The process may seem anonymous because it is inertial, or because nearly everyone assumes it to be perfectly natural. But history, big and small, is not just disappearing; it is being disappeared just as surely as human beings are 'disappeared' by dictatorships.

Of course, history has always been an ambiguous affair – a (consciously and unconsciously) constructed official story employed by powerful men to legitimize their rule ever since the armed Mesopotamian god-kings conquered the wilderness to build their city-states. Since then, history has been a long series of cataclysms. In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin described the 'angel of history' being thrown backwards by a storm out of Paradise. At his feet lies 'one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage'. While the angel would like to 'make whole what has been smashed', the storm 'irresistibly propels him into a future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows ever skyward. The storm is what we call progress.'

Despite its many disasters, there have always been counter-stories to imperial myth, and history has remained contested ground. Individual memory is a knot in the web of collective memory, and this shared history is an immense, diverse psychic commons sustaining our sense of human community, a reservoir where glimpses of freedom, and the remembrance of atrocities and triumphs are all preserved. We need this common historical space to replenish our inner capacity to remain human in the same way that forests and wild places are needed to nourish and renew the land. But just as the world's forests are being destroyed, so too is memory's commons.

Empires have always worked to undermine authentic memory – for example, the book burnings by the Ch'in emperors of ancient China, a method still employed in our time. (This strategy was updated in 1970s China under the Maoist regime, when photographs of a line-up of party leaders were retouched to turn purged bureaucrats into shrubs.) Monumentalism is another age-old form of control. One grotesque recent monument was the construction by the Balaguer government in the Dominican Republic of an enormous lighthouse, far from the sea, to honour Columbus and his 'discovery' – a project which levelled poor *barrios* of Santo Domingo and now causes frequent electrical 'brown-outs' throughout the city.

Despite their destructiveness, such methods have limited results, to which the patent shabbiness of the Columbus story and the toppling monuments of the Soviet bloc dramatically testify. There are now greater threats to memory, greater weapons in power's arsenal. The modern transform-



RAFAEL WOLLMANN / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

Street theatre keeps alive the memories of those 'disappeared' by the Argentinian military. Is everything vital in our history also being 'disappeared'?

ations in consciousness brought about during the last century by mass communications and consumer society seem to be changing the *form* memory takes. And history's form shapes content as surely as it takes particular words or kinds of words to make a certain kind of statement.

This change evokes the legend of the Chinese emperor who decreed for himself the exclusive use of the pronoun 'I'. The modern media have now donned these imperial robes, speaking while everyone else listens. One can no longer even make

'Big Brother isn't watching you so much as Big Brother is you, watching'

a revolution without making sure to seize the television stations (as apparently was the case in Romania), since instead of directly making history, people watch the screen to see what is happening. The contemporary erosion of people's capacity to think for themselves, and the monopolization of meaning by media, seem to be succeeding at what the legendary emperor could only have imagined.

A new society emerged in Western Europe and North America during the last century as the organic structures of life began to unravel. In the United States, where this development seems most pernicious, the colonization and control of culture was an explicit strategy to obtain labour discipline and mass consumption. As historian Stuart Ewen has pointed out, by the early twentieth century business leaders, coming out of a period of mass labor unrest, recognized the need to manage not only production but consumption

as well. A new kind of citizen had to be shaped to respond appropriately to the plethora of industrial products offered by the emergent corporate market system. As one entrepreneur wrote in the 1920s, education must teach 'the masses not what to think but how to think, and thus... how to behave like human beings in the machine age'.

By the 1950s industrial expansion and economic growth provided the twin pillars of a universal secular religion, and consumerism an unquestioned cultural norm. This consumer ethos (if not necessarily its material benefits) is spreading rapidly to the countries of the post-colonial world and the former Soviet empire. Today the question culture critic Vance Packard asked back in 1950s is increasingly relevant: 'What is the impact on the human spirit of all these pressures to consume?'

Since then, the impact of television – which has become the key instrument for consumer culture worldwide – has confirmed Packard's fears. Television flattens, disconnects and renders incoherent experiences and history. Its seemingly meaningful pastiche of images works best to sell commodities – objects devoid of any history. But more importantly, it also affirms the whole universe of commodity consumption as the only life worth living. Wherever the set is turned on, local culture implodes.

Though sold as a tool that could preserve memory, television utterly fragments and colonizes it. What remains is a cult of the perpetual present, in continual giddy motion. The jumbled, packaged events of recent and remote history come to share the relative weightlessness of soap operas and dish detergent. Perspective evaporates. Power no longer needs to shout since, as Mark Crispin Miller once remarked, 'Big Brother isn't watching you so much as Big

HISTORY

THE PAST UNDER SIEGE

PINKHASOV / MAGNUM



The mighty have fallen in post-communist Moscow: yesterday's hero, today's plaything.

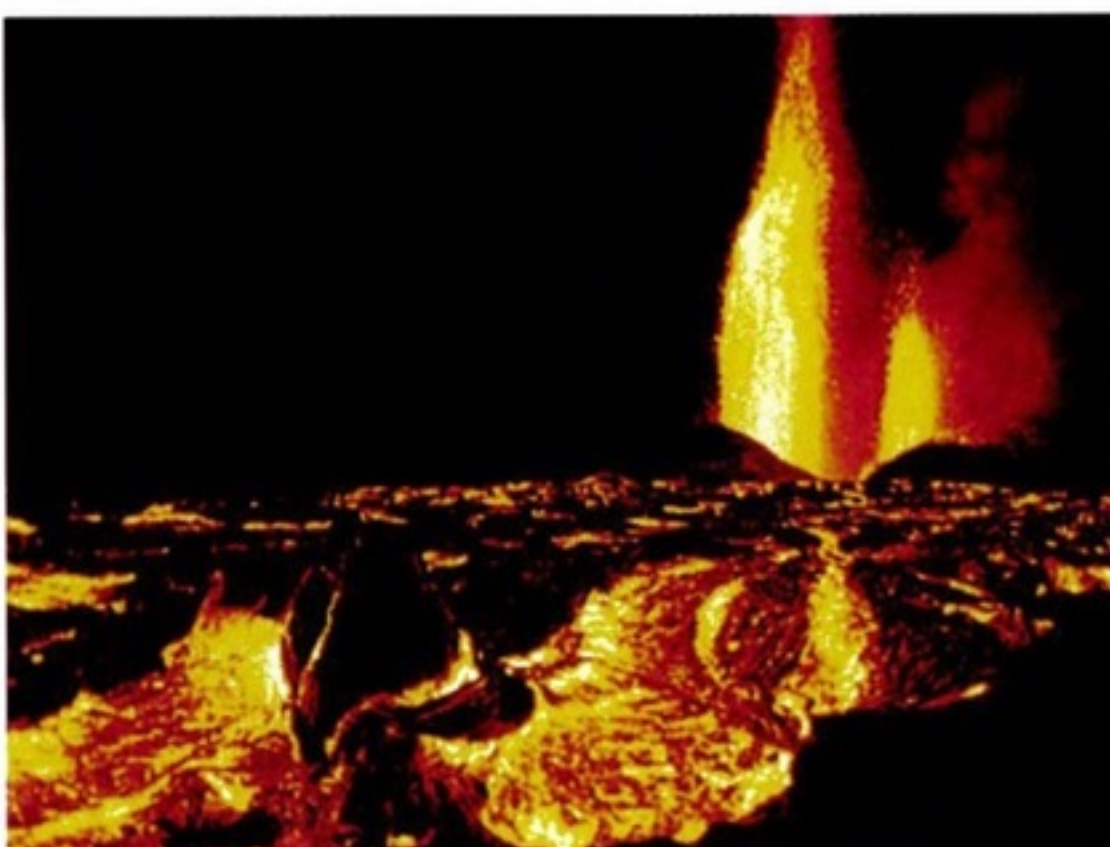
Brother is you, watching'. Historical memory is now becoming what was televised, while that commons of the mind, domesticated and simulated by the media, is receding.

A striking case in point is the way people (especially North Americans) were manipulated into supporting the Gulf War. Someone who has already seen tens of thousands of people 'killed' on TV has a difficult time understanding the human suffering caused by the TV-filtered special effects of techno-war. Yet even the war hysteria, which one journalist described as a 'nightly electronic Nuremberg Rally', faded with time, as the images crystallized into scraps of last year's mini-series. When Iraq was more recently attacked and several civilians killed, many passive patriots who had been glued to their sets during the War were now barely aware of it. It was all, as is often said, 'history' – which is to say, it no longer existed. Their indifference today is as disturbing as their spasm of enthusiasm was yesterday.

The media-driven market system is doing something to human meaning far more serious than government propaganda or censorship ever could. Just when the peoples of the former colonies (as well as women and other formerly invisible groups) are rediscovering their own stories, long suppressed by official history, modern technique is poised to shape everyone's story, making them all a fragment in one long photomontage. How will so many different peoples be able to tell their own unique stories when TV itself has become the dominant mode of communication and recall? How will memory express diverse modes of being when work, buying and selling are the core of

what is rapidly becoming a global monoculture? Will those cultures that aren't compatible with televised sensibility just disappear altogether, like the trees that once stood across from my window?

The disappearance of languages and cultures is as terrifying a prospect as the current mass extinction of species. At current



Volcanic Hawaii: thermal developers threaten the islanders' most sacred sites.

rates, some 90 per cent of the world's languages will be moribund in the next century. And without language there can be no memories. Ironically, the greatest threat is to those scattered cultures whose memory precedes official history – the primal and indigenous peoples, some with traditions reaching back to the Pleistocene. The native Hawaiians, for example, have seen their culture wither under the onslaught of progress. Many now speak only the language of their American conquerors, and remembrance has eroded as the places to which words and sensibilities were

bound, have come under the bulldozer's blade. Enormous resorts, shopping malls and golf courses (as well as military bombing ranges) have devoured burial grounds, old fishing villages and sacred sites.

I will give just one devastating example. On the island of Hawaii itself, where the active volcano Kilauea constantly creates new land, is some of the richest lowland tropical rainforest left in the island chain (only about ten per cent survives). Even according to the conqueror's laws, the forest, called Wao Kele O Puna, was to be held in perpetuity for Hawaiians to practise subsistence activities and to gather ceremonial and medicinal plants, many of which grow there and nowhere else. Yet in the late 1980s the state government of Hawaii traded the 110-square-kilometre forest to corporate developers who hope to drill into it and tap the volcano's geothermal energy.

To the Hawaiians, however, the volcano is a living being, the goddess Pele. She created and continues to create the islands. Hawaiians have many good reasons to fight geothermal development – its risks, its cost, its violation of native land rights, its inevitable destruction of pristine forest. But the project is above all an assault on the heart of their culture and religion, and thus on a tangible reminder of what it means to be a Hawaiian. As Pualani Kanehele, a respected teacher of the sacred Hawaiian dance, the *hula kahiko*, argued, to cap Pele's steam would be 'putting a cap on the Hawaiian culture... and Hawaii will be dead. Then this may as well be a new California. Because we'll all be *haoles* [whites] with the same goals as the *haoles*: make money.'

Meaning, like ecology, is context: everything is connected to everything else. As strands are pulled from the skein of memory, what it means to be a person within a human community shifts toward some troubling unknown. The experience of the Hawaiians, who have seen their ancestors' bones turned up by machines so that someone else's paradise can be fabricated, lends special resonance to Benjamin's warning that even the dead are not safe when power triumphs.

If, as Czech novelist Milan Kundera has written, 'the struggle... against power is the struggle against forgetting', the need to remember must also inevitably confront power. We may come to need truth commissions to recover our shared memory, like those organized to uncover and preserve the lost stories of disappeared persons in Latin America. Taking responsibility for our past might help us uncover the complex weave of histories that now connect us all in our shared suffering and grandeur.

David Watson teaches, writes and survives in inner-city Detroit.

EVERY few months I rejoin an underground community. I travel up to London to stand all day heaving down huge heavy volumes, to thumb through page after page of names written in beautiful curling script; or else I spend my day in a half-lit subterranean world where hundreds of people tremble breathlessly over cranky microfilm machines, straining desperately to read the scrawl of someone who wandered from house to house on a door-knocking survey 150 years ago.

You would never know this strange community of searchers existed. But it grows by the day, involving people who travel across the world to partake of its addictive pleasures. We are reclaiming history from the textbooks, digging our own ancestors out of the silence.

Time was when genealogy was the business of dukes – or of social climbers anxious to find a hidden aristocratic connection. Maybe Alex Haley's *Roots* helped to change that. Suddenly a generation of black Americans gained a new sense of themselves from thinking about individual African ancestors rather than a mass of uprooted slaves. This sense of vital connection with your ancestors is common to most of the world's cultures but it has been largely lost until now in the progress-obsessed West.

I started taking an interest when my first child was born – as for many parents, an event which altered my slant on life. Suddenly it seemed important to know where Kate had come from as well as where she was

Digging into silence

Chris Brazier explains why he turned detective.

going to. Five years on I still often look at all the names and what I know of the personalities stretching back into the eighteenth century and marvel at the wondrous,

implausible fact that my children could never have existed if even one of these people had never lived too, and that she carries part of each of them in her.

The motive for the quest may be personal – but the process itself is like an assertion of the value of an alternative history, one viewed from underneath. My closest connection with the early nineteenth century comes no longer with the great men, the Peels or Wellingtons who made it into the school syllabus. Rather it is with the ordinary women and men of my own and my partner's family, whether they were shoemakers in York or homemakers in Manchester, blacksmiths in Dockland London or itinerant labourers on the Devon moorlands.

Social history is vital but it paints in broad brushstrokes: movements of people to the cities; mill workers' living conditions; shiploads of slaves. Family history gives it to you from the other end,

in fragments and in glimpses through grimy window-panes. Through it you see

the histories normally hidden from us, that of women in the home or unlearned working people – but here the seamstress taking in piecework to keep her nine children fed is your own grandfather's great-grandmother.

Here's how you might start to reclaim a bit of history for yourself.

The first step is the most important and is well worth doing even if you have no interest in going any further. ■



FOUR STEPS INTO THE PAST

1 Talk and listen to your oldest relative – a whole generation of memories will die with them. Be patient and take down every detail and anecdote. You will find out much that you didn't know. I knew, for instance, that my grandmother was born in South Africa. But I didn't realize this was because her father had gone there to spend years trying to make it as a touring concert impresario. Sadly he failed and had to return to England and money worries that contributed to his early death. He's at the centre of the photo with my grandmother second from the right.

2 Start working your way back via birth and marriage records, which in England and Wales were kept from 1837 and are held at St Catherine's House in London. If you live in North America or Australasia you will start with local records but are more than likely to find yourself having to make a visit to Europe or Africa in the end. Each new birth certificate is a minor triumph, not least because it gives you a mother's maiden name, a new surname connected to you. This alone often feels like a blow struck against the historical invisibility of women.

3 Use the census records to fill any gaps. These have been kept every ten years since 1841 in England and Wales and not long after in other countries ruled by the Victorian British, whose enthusiasm for ordering the world by record-keeping I am no longer inclined to scorn. Censuses can give vital clues: in this way we recently cracked the long-sought identity of my partner's great-grandmother, a servant in a great house who had fallen pregnant to the coachdriver and then given the baby into the care of another family (a plot worthy of Barbara Cartland).

4 Choose the line of descent you want to follow and start going through local church records. You can get quite a long way using only the national records, and that may well be enough for you. But if you go on you will certainly have to choose a particular branch of the family to investigate and start digging around where they used to live.

Of course you may be lucky and happen upon a distant cousin who has already done all the work for you. But that way you'll be missing out on the thrill of the chase.

Highways into history

There is no one version of history – historical truth, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. But people's understanding of the past has been shaped by certain key philosophies of history – here is an NI guide.

THE TRADITIONAL PAST

Origins Traditional notions of the past reside in the rhythm of the seasons; they are attempts to understand how humankind should adapt to nature. They usually involve some sort of creation story and thus are mixed with religion.

Philosophy The histories of early hunter-gatherer societies were morality tales about how to interact with nature and each other. Gradually these morality tales came to focus on the behavior of the priest, ruler and warrior class as the political state emerged from Egypt to imperial China. But history remained a series of 'lessons' telling (often in remarkable detail) of the great deeds or shortcomings of past rulers and their consequences: glorious conquest, the collapse of cities or deadly offence given to some moody god. These histories were either static or cyclical with little sense of the evolution and direction of society.



Politics The shift in focus from ancestors to rulers was vital: in the process history fatefully moved from being everybody's story to that of kings and priests. History now glorified ruling families and their deeds but could also contain veiled criticism.

Typical Works Oral historians have worked hard to gather the folk tales of hunter-gatherer societies in Africa and the Americas. A contemporary appreciation of this type of history is Calvin Luther Martin's *In the Spirit of the Earth*. Ancient priest/emperor histories were designed to provide proper conduct guides for contemporary rulers – the Roman Tacitus and the Chinese Ssu-ma Chi'en are just two examples.

GOD'S WILL

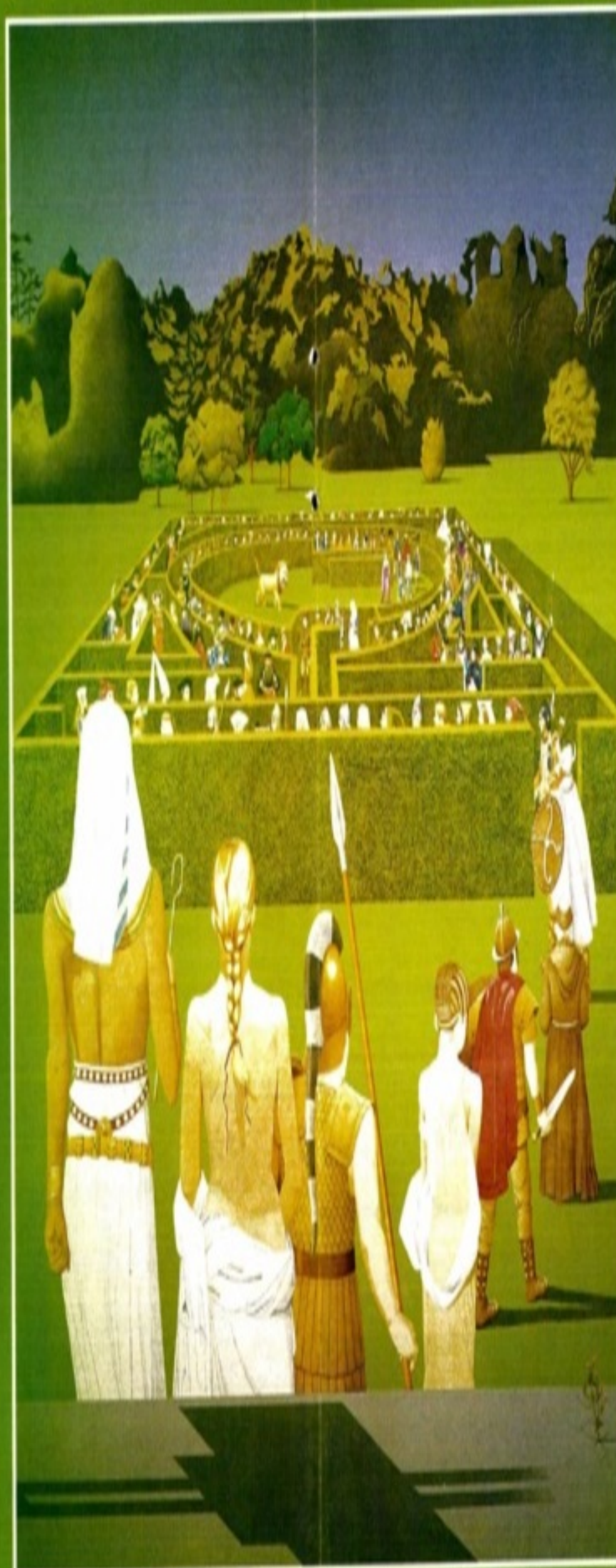
Origins Traditional notions of the past based on many whimsical gods gave way to one that unfolded according to the purpose of the one true God of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The nature gods of hunter-gatherers yielded to the sky gods of settled agriculture. These new religions grew up in Asia Minor and spread rapidly throughout the world.



Philosophy The eye here was directed to the future as much as to the past with events leading inevitably towards some final day of judgment. In general a 'chosen people' or community of the faithful (either by birth or conviction) have been anointed to carry out God's will on earth. History is a battleground between their purifying religious values and those who stand in their way. Just who was God's true agent and who an imposter became the trickiest of historical questions.

Politics Defending holy scripture as historical truth became the main buttress to the power of religious and secular authorities. Religion was politics. Heretics with a different view of the past were usually not tolerated. Both revolt and repression were carried out as if they were God's will.

Typical Works The Qu'ran and the Bible are among the first history books. The scholars of Islamic universities and the holy orders of Medieval Europe held the keys to human memory. Classic books of the period were those of St Augustine, St Bernard or the twelfth-century Islamic scholar Ibn Al-Athir.



THE GOSPEL OF PROGRESS

Origins This is a major point of departure for nineteenth-century history. Here the influences of natural science in general and Charles Darwin in particular helped shape a cult of objective historical truth. History could be a value-free science reflecting in its methods the same march of progress that it was chronicling.

Philosophy The notion of progress born in Enlightenment Europe hardened into a sense of the inevitability of human advancement. At its best the new emphasis on historical accuracy gave a more balanced view of the past. At its worst it led to an automatic belief in the goodness of modernity.

Politics The crude use of Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' idea suited industrial society's need to justify the winners without too much thought for the losers. Marxism, another form of the gospel of progress, turned Darwin on his head to provide revolutionaries with a scientific faith in the inevitability of progressive socialism. Today crude certainties about what historical truth is and where it leads us have been shattered.

Typical Works EH Carr's *What is History?* is a classic and intelligent case for the progressive interpretation. The optimism of generations of Marxist historians has stumbled on the realities of 'actually existing socialism'. Ironically the main proponents of progressive optimism today are conservative historians concerned to defend the victories of the modernizing market.



PATRIOTIC HISTORY

Origins The growth of the nation-state called for a different kind of past. The first secular theory of history can be traced to the work of nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke. It soon spread across Europe, forming the dominant mode of history-writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This kind of history is still a staple of school textbooks.



Philosophy The nation and whatever noble predecessors it can claim are the centrepiece of this history – almost always a success story. The sense of a common past is the glue that keeps a country together. The nation's spiritual beginnings are traced back to the kings of ancient Gaul, to powerful African emperors or noble tribes in long-gone Teutonic forests. The nation takes up the mantle of 'the chosen people' from religion, and patriotic history is the unfolding of this people's special destiny.

Politics While the politics of this history varies from radical republicanism to jingoistic conservatism, a sense of special national destiny is always its motor force. It revolves around the deeds and qualities that made the nation great and in the case of Europe how this greatness was transported abroad to civilize lesser peoples. Much Third World patriotic history is a reaction to Western paternalism but takes on many of its characteristics, as with the murals in post-independence Ghana which attributed to Ghanaian genius the invention of the alphabet and the steam engine.

Typical Works The French historian François Guizot set the tone in the early nineteenth century and has been followed by scores of other European historians ranging in approach from the radical Jules Michelet to the High Tory Winston Churchill. At its worst this degenerates into militaristic sabre-rattling history but at least the cruder justifications of the West's 'civilizing role' are now gone.

HISTORY FROM BELOW

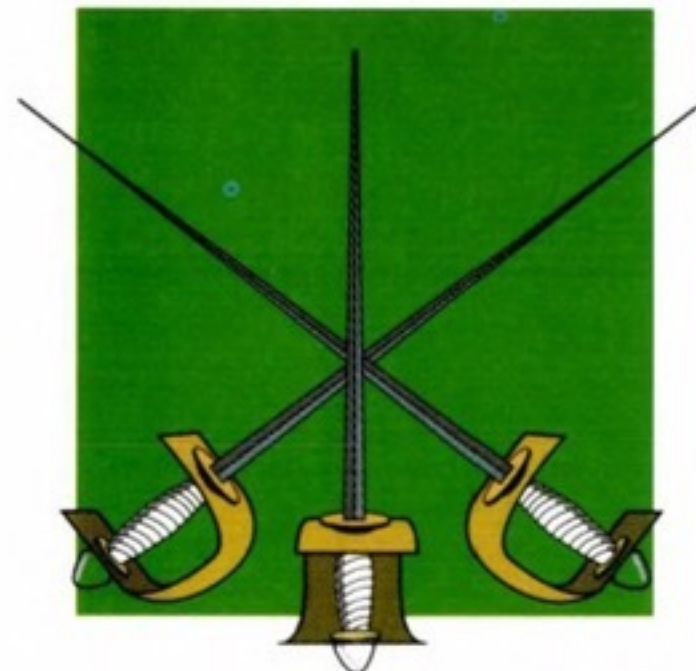
Origins This is not properly speaking one of the 'grand governing narratives' that are usually identified as philosophies of history – it makes few claims about the overall meaning of history. But social history is a democratic response that accompanies the growth of political rights, literacy and a taste for their own history by those people left out due to their gender, colour, class or beliefs. It started in the late nineteenth century but only flowered in the 1960s.



Philosophy The social historian tends to look at society from below, concentrating on the issues of everyday life: the organization of work, consumer habits, family patterns and the dynamics of class and gender. Social history often focuses on the part rather than the whole: a local village, a particular industry, the influence of a church, gay or bohemian sub-cultures. Larger meanings are illuminated by these shafts of light from below.

Politics This kind of focus tends towards a sympathy with people at the bottom of society. This is in sharp contrast to much of national history, which engages us with those in power and their problems in 'managing' society. The conclusions of social historians can be conservative but the overall political tendency of this kind of history is on the Left.

Typical Works There are many fine works of social history but EP Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* is as good as any. The French Annales school of the early twentieth century, led by historians like Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel, was a major influence in starting the social-history revolution, using local studies to give a vision of the whole society. Contemporary social history has narrowed its focus. Many feel that this leaves the overall analysis of historical meaning too open to those with less democratic inclinations than the social historian.



The cloak of power

*The US continues to police the Third World despite the absence of any Soviet threat.
Colin Gordon reveals the spurious way history is used to justify sending in the marines.*

TOO often, history is to the past what astrology is to the solar system; less a serious attempt to chart paths and orbits than a search for fanciful patterns and pleasing images. Recent US foreign policy leans heavily on this kind of dubious historical justification. In part this reflects the intellectual drift of American power. Cut loose from the rhetorical moorings of the Cold War, the US has begun to throw out other anchors: Munich, Yalta, Vietnam. Too often this search for a useful past reflects a preoccupation with the proper 'image' and 'credibility' needed to justify future policy.



ILLUSTRATION: CHUM MCCLEOD

There is some confusion as to whether the past is being used to justify the present or vice versa. Certainly much of the 'no more Vietnams' chest-thumping of the past three years has been aimed less at a war being fought than at the memory of a war long lost. It's as if victory in the Gulf might 'prove' that the US could have won in Vietnam.

There is also confusion over the wider lessons of the Cold War. The architects of the New World Order are confronted with an unfriendly world despite the Soviet collapse. It is just too threatening to acknowledge how little 40 years of shadow boxing

with the Soviets meant for the aspirations of most of the world.

Certainly the most important use of history for the US at the moment lies in justifying intervention in a post-Cold War world. Military might may no longer be the engine of domestic growth it once was but the US increasingly sees it as a substitute for economic might – the key to holding onto Third World outposts and maintaining leverage over key trading partners. As one observer noted recently, the US has become 'the Saudi Arabia of security', marketing military power (instead of oil) as its singular contribution to global commerce. But if the battle for the hearts and minds of the Third World has been won, why does the US continue the fight? And if the Third World is no longer full of communist dupes why are they not left to decide their own fates?

The end of the Cold War, in this sense, is an intellectual rather than a strategic challenge. History is important to the moral and intellectual reorganization of American power. During the Gulf crisis, 'Munich' was constantly invoked. Anything short of war in the Gulf was equated with the notorious appeasement of fascism in the 1930s. Invoking memories of World War Two was also a way of suggesting that this was not merely a US affair, but the collective will of 'the allies' under American leadership.

On closer examination the Munich analogy was more suggestive than the US intended. Western powers 'appeased' Germany in the hope that Hitler would vent his energies in a Soviet-German war of attrition. Appeasement turned to war when a non-aggression pact with the Soviets allowed Hitler to turn west. The Soviets, as Mikhail Gorbachev noted in 1985, would certainly not forget that the West had 'tried to manipulate the expansion of German fascism, directing it to the East'. Similarly the US spent the 1980s pursuing a bloody stalemate in the Iran-Iraq war, hoping to weaken both countries, heighten the anxieties of smaller Gulf states and guarantee an ongoing American presence. As in World War Two, moral indignation followed years of cynical and callous diplomacy.

Indeed, for all the effort to resurrect the spirit of Franklin Roosevelt, it is the aggressive imperialist Teddy Roosevelt who haunts the New World Order. In this spirit conservative historian Paul Johnson recently argued that recent Western interventions (the Falklands/Malvinas, Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Somalia) simply prove the incapacity of the Third World for self-government and the necessary altruism of conventional colonialism.

Some new justification for intervening in the Third World is certainly needed –

Soviet collapse, while removing a largely manageable threat in Europe, also stripped US policy in the southern hemisphere of any sense of political or intellectual order. The paradox facing the State Department's grand theorists is that the world is a more dangerous place without the Soviets.



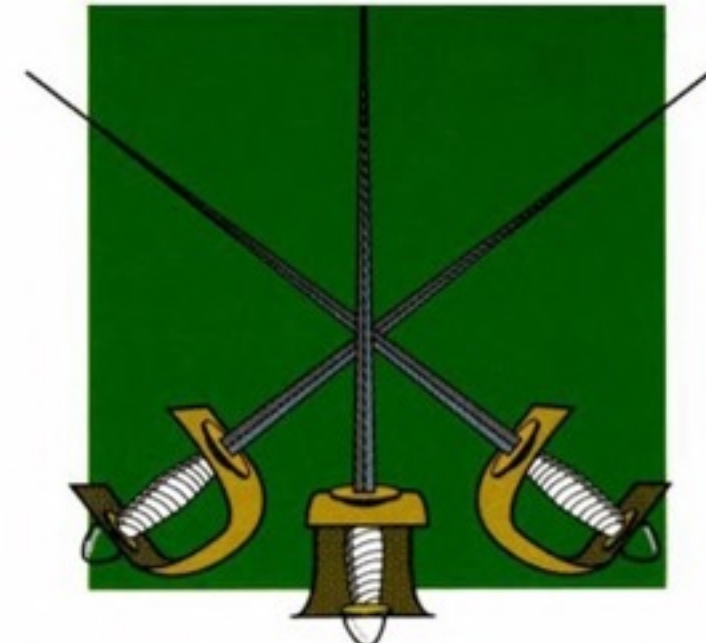
SHARON STEWART / IMPACT VISUALS

Out of focus: historical doublespeak was a Reagan speciality.

Examined more closely, the Americans' peculiar sense of history is less a blank check for intervention than a means of replacing anticommunism and avoiding the risks of taking on all challenges. In early 1992 the Pentagon drafted a blueprint for the New World Order which hammered away at the importance of American power but also trod softly through the fiscal and strategic debris of American decline. 'The US must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order,' but it 'cannot become the world's "policeman" by assuming responsibility for righting every wrong' and would only address 'selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests but those of our allies and friends'. The New World Order, in other words, catches US aspirations at a time when they vastly exceed US abilities.

This sense of limits also draws cynically and selectively on history. Debate over the Balkans, for example, has routinely stressed the region's historical complexity and ambiguity. The former Yugoslavia, as the *New York Times* warned recently, is 'a tangled tragedy' of 'age-old myths and grievances' which outsiders enter 'at their peril'. Yet American prudence in the Balkans, and the reasons given for that prudence, betray a more troubling assumption: Europe has a history and the Third World does not. The roots of conflict in Somalia or Iraq or Peru run no deeper than their





first acquaintance with the United States.

It is not surprising that the US would use a sort of *Time-Life* history of World War Two to set the moral and practical parameters of post-Cold War policy. Historical allusions to Vietnam, however, are more complex and more cynical. Again the message is simple: the US fought in Vietnam with one hand tied behind its back. Who tied the hand there is a matter of debate, but the press, the antiwar movement and the timid militarism of the Johnson Administration are the usual sus-



BRUNO BARBEY / MAGNUM

Grunt's eye view of Vietnam: the US military has learned all the wrong lessons.

pects. In future, so the argument goes, the US should respond without hesitation and with 'massive and decisive force'.

Again, there are holes in the historical reasoning that you could drive a SCUD launcher through. The US was not constrained in its use of military power in Vietnam. The technological fetishism in the Gulf had clear echoes of the late 1960s, when the US sought to avoid a ground war through, as one Air Force official argued, 'the unparalleled, lavish use of airpower as a substitute for manpower'. The US lost the war despite a massive and indiscriminate show of force, at a cost which eventually crippled its own economy. Tactical comparisons between Vietnam and the Gulf are spurious at best.

The importance of the historical analogy lies more in the packaging of foreign policy than its implementation. The Gulf War was little more than a promotional trailer for the past and future of American power – witness the cynical demonization of Hussein, the carefully manufactured myth of 'incubator atrocities' and the eager misrepresentation of American military prowess.

The US portrayed the Gulf War as everything the Vietnam War was not: politically popular, militarily decisive and morally

unambiguous. Victory, in this loose historical reasoning, meant that failure in Vietnam and the aimlessness of American policy since 1975 could be attributed to a state of mind (the 'Vietnam Syndrome') rather than to the limits of American power.

Image is vital in US foreign policy. In this respect, allusions to Vietnam are doubly ironic. A principal source of US arrogance and myopia in South-East Asia was the insistence that its war there was a test case of Cold War resolve. As the fighting escalated so did the importance of the 'test' and the implicit threat to credibility. Fascination with how the war was perceived by others pressed the US to continue the violence long after its goals in South Vietnam had been forgotten. Satirist Joseph Heller captured this reasoning perfectly: 'If we are willing to go to war every time our vital interests are at stake, then I say we must go to war every time our vital interests are not at stake to make sure friend and foe understand we will'.

During the Cold War, the US engaged in a symbolic conflict (Vietnam) in order to prove its ability and willingness to fight other wars. Since the Cold War, the US has engaged in a series of conflicts (Panama, Iraq, Somalia) in order to erase the memory of losing a war in which it had rashly invested its prestige and credibility. The result is to repeat rather than repair past mistakes. Each emerging challenge is magnified; every crisis reflects (as George Bush suggested of the Gulf War) 'the dependability of America's commitment to its friends and allies'. By the 1990s this renewal of reputation, eagerly pinned to the Gulf War, lasted no longer than the post-war parades. In the end cynical appeals to the past echoed Marx's insight: history does repeat itself, the second time as farce.

History is temporarily useful to those who wilfully misinterpret it, but genuinely useful only to those who make an effort to understand it. The historical memory of recent American foreign policy is shallow, cynical and selective. It shapes the past for present purposes, retrieving only those historical fragments which reinforce present assumptions. And sometimes it is more convenient to ignore the past altogether – in Somalia, for example, where the US helped arm the warlords of Mogadishu. Amnesia puts US policy in a better light. Unfortunately, as Aldous Huxley once observed, the fact that 'we do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach'. ■

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Confessions of a military historian

John Charles ponders on the fascination that war still holds for so many.

AT grammar school in England, following my father's instructions, I was a 'conscientious objector' in the cadet force. The issue became something of a *cause célèbre*. I was caught between two fires, for neither the sergeant-major nor my father were people to be trifled with. I refused to wear a uniform, marched glumly on two left feet carrying a ludicrously large Enfield 303 rifle of First World War vintage, to a chorus of school-boy taunts and martial bellowings. Only when I nearly removed my front teeth with the damned Enfield was I allowed to do art and drama instead. In 1982 this same luckless schoolboy, researching an MA in Naval History, found himself on American TV learnedly pontificating about the Falklands/Malvinas War.

Fate gives strange twists to a life story, and the trend continues to this day. Burdened with cameras and tape recorders I have puffed and blown my way through dripping jungles and musty concrete bunkers across large parts of Asia, stuck microphones up countless people's noses and listened endlessly to retired officers maligning their soldiery and the rank and file cursing their officers. I've ended up concluding, like John Keegan in his shocking book *The Face of Battle*, that the feelings of soldiers are brief and stark. Main sensation: Fear. Main desire: Escape. Main

objective: Survival.

The strange ups and downs of human behaviour under combat conditions are part of the magnetic fascination of war studies: here we see Homo Sapiens in all his (for after all it is the male of the species who has taken to warfare as a kind of gender vocation) grandeur and rottenness: a Naked Ape if ever there was one. While there are many weird people around who dress in military kit and subscribe to magazines that sensationalize war, most of the great writers on the subject have been obsessed by its waste and pity. The first resounding words of Virgil's *Aeneid* are echoed in the poignant insight of Dr AL Rowse: 'It is very disheartening how human affairs always follow the same patterns... nobody ever learns anything, nobody ever profits by the mistakes... but lets himself in for the same mess of blood and misery as before.'

In disputed histories it now seems dangerously optimistic to assign 'causes' for the simplest everyday matters, let alone bloody conflicts that leave thousands dead. The behavioral sciences, the professoriat, the Learned Journals, seem no more effective in dealing with war than the weeping of a Serbian widow or the vows of a Somali boy to avenge his brother's death at the hands of Canadian troops. But the historical echoes of war never seem to die away.

In Australia, for example, the Pacific war still has strong echoes. Old photographs of

the Australian War Memorial in Canberra show much of the rest of the city to be, despite its sweeping boulevards, a comparative scrub – clearly the memorial was the architectural priority with even the Parliament House standing in its shadow. As for the names and ages on the monuments, they recall Air Chief Marshal Dowding's remark during the Battle of Britain: 'Unless our young men can kill their young men at a rate of more than two to one, we shall lose the war'.

Even today the Canberra monument remains one of the most beautiful and haunting places of its kind anywhere, yet bristling with paradoxes and unanswerable questions. When I visited, some (Asian) kids were clambering over a large tank, making all the battle noises adults make in just as earnest but a more deadly manner. An elderly curator, on the verge of apoplexy, screamed: 'This is not a toy! Soldiers died in this... to save your freedom. You should respect them!'. The children seemed abashed and slunk away, only to rush squealing back when the curator disappeared.

What is it that evokes such passion about the history – particularly the recent history – of military experience? Insight was provided recently by one of my oral-history informants who, though well aware that the Army aimed to dehumanize the enemy by orchestrating myths about them, sought the truth about military life elsewhere. For him

the decisive factor was the comradeship: the boastful derring-do, the safety of the group, the dirty jokes, the remorseless march of 50,000 hobnails in unison. 'We thought we were God at least,' he said. 'We set ourselves to right every wrong there ever was, even some invented for us.'

This rings true. For many, many people 'The War', whether planned by generals with maps and chalk or led by ragged guerillas, was the only really meaningful experience they ever had: a dangerous but exciting oasis in a drab landscape of nine-to-five. And if comfortable retired bank clerks can look back wistfully on it, how much more valid are the claims of those with nothing to lose? You see them every day in news photographs from all the latest global trouble spots; some of them mere children dressed in rags with their AK-47s held triumphantly over their heads.

Few who fight wars have the luxury to challenge or even think much about the reasons for fighting. Historians do that after the damage is already done. Oral historians are in a peculiar position. We know that the role played by our informants assumes vastly greater importance as time passes. Instead of softening prejudices time tends to harden them. Most of the former soldiers I talked to enjoyed their war, at least in retrospect. They revel, they bask, they magnify. 'It was a good war for me at least,' said one old man unselfconsciously. 'Plenty of grub; your mates all around; you were proud, know what I mean? And I can tell you some tales. We got away with murder... plenty of sex.'

War is thus far more than the 'spiritual return to the Dark Ages' that one former general recently described. This in fact applies only to the defeated. For most of its winners the glory increases as the historical shadows lengthen. Their stories lose

nothing in the telling. Murderers become heroes and gangsters patriots; rapists were just letting off steam; trivial lives gained a transitory majesty. Perhaps this is war's most insidious side: turning horror into glory. It is this popular male culture of glory and adventure that helps politicians like Margaret Thatcher and General Galtieri continue to follow William Shakespeare's advice in *Henry V* to 'busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels'.

John Charles works for the National Institute of Multimedia Education in Chiba, Japan.



Above: From both ends of life: German boys in 1902 anticipate a half-century of militarism.

Right: The camaraderie of the common cause leads some ex-soldiers to fond memories of war.



Hidden from history

Most history theme parks are good at giving you the conventional wisdom of great men and great deeds. But concealed beneath these are the inconvenient histories of those who wanted something different but have been robbed of the voice to tell their own stories.



Sexual rebels

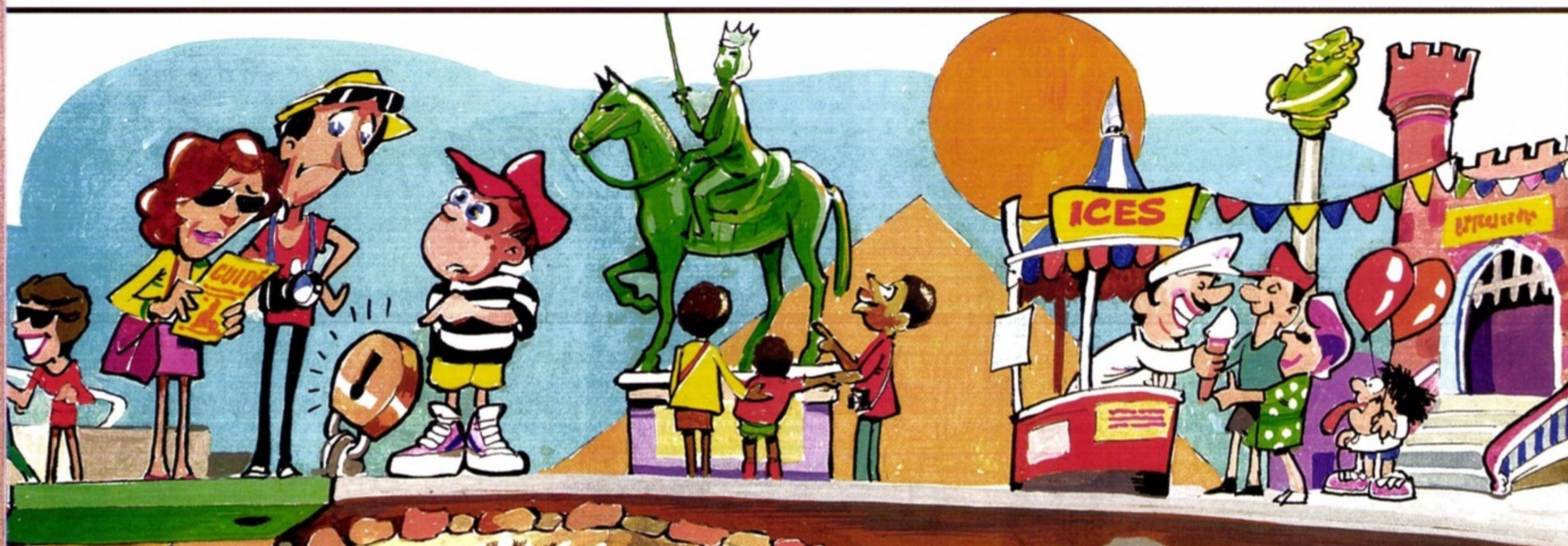
Throughout the ages people have tried to do it differently. Gay men and lesbians sought a different sexuality in place of heterosexual monogamy. Their struggles were more than a private matter and helped to widen the public space for what was socially acceptable. The battle for a freer love has often been associated with artists, revolutionaries, religious dissenters, intellectuals, and that shadowy world known as Bohemia. In many Third World cultures, such as those of the Pacific islands, looser, more fluid definitions of sexuality were either exploited by European merchants or suppressed by puritanical missionaries. The history of this type of dissent is only now beginning to be told.

Africans

The rich history of the continent before colonialism has been buried under the arrogance and ignorance of the colonizers. They put their own histories of European monarchy and culture in place of proud African memory of the old ways. The European idea that Africa was made up of insular and backward tribal societies hid a rich web of relations between forest cultivators and miners in the south, savanna and desert traders further north, rulers and merchants of the North African settled belt. Archeology, linguistics and oral history have begun to establish that pre-colonial Africa had a fluid and adaptable society with many points of contact with the outside world and with interesting methods of problem-solving. Tradition did not mean stagnation.

Communalism

The desire to build egalitarian communities is a recurrent one in human history. The memories that inspire it can be traced back to neolithic villages whose autonomous lives survived the rise of the centralized state. Monastic communities, the Diggers of the English Revolution, religious sects like the early Christian Brethren of the Free Spirit, mystical Sufi Islam, early anarchist and pacifist communities in the US – the list is a long and courageous one. The desire to value the communal good above individual power or family advantage has been inherited in our day by many movements within youth culture.



Witches

Witchcraft and its associated rituals provided the rallying point for early feminists and religious dissenters who found the straitjacket of medieval Christian Europe too confining. Their celebrations of religious, cultural and often sexual freedom inverted prominent Christian symbols. Their values recalled more traditional beliefs of nature worship, the fellowship of human community and a direct relationship with spiritual power unmediated by a priest class. These movements were often built on regional identities. In the Spanish Inquisition and all across Europe and the Americas thousands of women were slaughtered in the ruthless suppression of this alternative source of power.

Military resisters

The heroism of soldiers is part of triumphal 'drum and trumpet' history but in reality most wars have involved press gangs and national drafts forcing reluctant citizens to fight. There is a rich history of draft-dodging, desertion and open rebellion by rank-and-file soldiers. In May and June 1917, for example, the French Army refused to go back into the trenches and rose against its officers. In Vietnam the US Army was torn apart by disaffected soldiers 'fragging' (attempting to assassinate) their officers. The Army admits to over 300 such incidents in 1970 alone.



Slave revolts

It is commonplace to credit enlightened European opinion in the nineteenth century with the abolition of slavery. But slaves themselves often did not take their condition as natural. Nat Turner, Toussaint l'Ouverture and the Black Jacobins of Haiti, the Underground Railway to Canada, the escaped slave communities of Brazil, the Maroons of Jamaica: all of these challenged the right to hold slaves. Revolts and escapes like these increased the costs of keeping and guarding slaves and helped make the slave-holding system no longer economically viable.



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY



Times change, politicians don't: a campaigning suffragette postcard. The first wave of feminism is both a topic of study and a source of inspiration for women historians today.

Old passions, new visions

Barbara Taylor takes a snapshot of women's history as it reaches a far-from-complacent maturity.

1969 A big left-wing history conference was meeting in Oxford. There were women there, but few spoke. In a tea break some women clustered together. 'What about a conference on women's history?' someone said. The idea caught hold but when Sheila Rowbotham stood up at the end of the plenary and began 'We thought it would be a good idea if anyone here who was working on women's history...' she was interrupted by gales of laughter. Another feminist historian, Sally Alexander, remembers how embarrassed she felt. 'What was so funny about that?' she recalls women murmuring to each other. 'Did we say something wrong?'

1993 In England last December we had a women's history conference – to celebrate the bicentenary of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist manifesto *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* – with

over 400 attending and many more trying to crowd in. In the US this June the Berkshire Women's History Conference expects at least 2,000 participants to hear over 500 papers on subjects as diverse as 'Women and Global Integration' and 'The Economic Productivity of Medieval Jewish Widows'. All over the globe, but particularly in Europe and the Americas, books, journals and courses devoted to women's history are springing up. A recent volume carries articles on developments in India, Japan, Australia, Nigeria, the former Soviet Union.¹ So, whatever our diffidence back in 1969, women's history has proved to be neither wrong nor funny.

SUCH achievements do not come without struggles, sometimes bitter ones. Women's history was born from the prickly womb of the Women's Liberation Movement. There had been historical work

done on women, much of it by feminists, in earlier decades, but it took second-wave feminism finally to put women's history on the intellectual map. Its presence there, throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s, was an overtly political one: as historians of women, we saw ourselves as part of feminism's intellectual shock troops, our work contributing to the movement's broad offensive against male domination.

'Women have come to revolutionary consciousness by means of ideas, actions and organizations which have been made predominantly by men,' Sheila Rowbotham wrote in 1972 in the preface to her pioneering *Women, Resistance and Revolution*. 'The language which makes us invisible to "history" is not coincidence, but part of our real situation in a society... which we do not control.' Rendering our history visible, then, was crucial to the struggle to achieve greater control over our

destinies. 'Women's liberation brings to all of us a strength and audacity we have never before known.'

Women had been *Hidden from History* – the title of another of Rowbotham's immensely influential early books – and our task was to bring that hidden history to light. This reclaiming role for women's history remains important. Prior to the 1960s, few standard history texts even mentioned women, much less made our lives and struggles the object of independent scrutiny. In England the development of social history in the 1960s and 1970s broadened the focus of historical investigation to include working people, the poor, the politically disenfranchised – yet even here (and even among its most radical proponents) little interest in women was evident.

The history of the family, which also emerged over this period, was written largely without reference to the specific experience of women or to power relations within the family unit. By the 1970s the growing presence of women in the field was changing this but as late as 1980 it was still possible for a leading male historian to deliver a conference paper surveying family history without mentioning a single article or book written by a woman. (An extensive supplementary bibliography was graciously provided the next day by three of the women present.)

As this last example demonstrates, mere ignorance was not the only obstacle women faced in making our history visible. Men, many of them eminent scholars, were often bigoted in their responses. An early conference of feminist historians in Germany was nearly invaded by an angry group of male professors who went on to denounce its organizers as fascists (an accusation echoed by some right-wing American academics today). An Australian feminist historian recalls an episode at Sydney University in the mid-1970s when a group of students asked that women's history be included in their courses, only to be told by one senior man that he saw 'no more reason to include women than cats or dogs or canaries'. Every feminist historian I know has stories of such encounters with men among whom arguing for women's history often produced 'the same look on their faces... as appears after an off-colour joke'.²

It was in this strongly politicized – at times polarized – atmosphere that the task of uncovering women's past was undertaken. Imbued with a militant partisanship, we sought in particular to rediscover the lives of ordinary women, to 'look beyond the "famous" individuals... to the mass of their contemporaries' as Anna Davin put it in 1972, in order to expose 'modes of oppres-

sion... and forms of resistance'.³ Our interpretation of women's past turned on studying the operations of what soon came to be called patriarchy and women's (covert as well as overt) opposition to it. No parade of scientific objectivity here: we wore our anti-patriarchal politics on our sleeves, or at least on our book covers, and made advocacy of female freedom the *sine qua non* of our historical scholarship.

Looking back, I still don't have much problem with this. We were often wrong, of course, but at least everyone knew what we were being wrong-headed about. And we argued vociferously amongst ourselves. In England disputes broke out over whether men or capitalism had been responsible for women's oppression; over the meaning of 'patriarchy' and whether it was an appropriate category of historical analysis; over the place of sexuality in the feminist tradition.

At about the same time feminist historians in the US were debating whether the celebration of feminine modes of thought and behaviour was inherently conservative. Did history reveal that all women's differences from men were entirely a product of gender-based oppression, or did we really have modes of being which were not only different but perhaps also (it was argued) better? This age-old debate within feminism shifted into a new register in the late 1980s with the work of 'poststructuralist' theorists like Denise Riley who in her controversial *Am I That Name* (1988)

argued that 'woman' was a cultural category rather than a natural fact, a product of cultural-linguistic conventions rather than psychology or biology.⁴

The argument stimulated rows which still go on, but what it reflected was the growing recognition that women's history could not be understood outside the wider milieu in which sexual difference acquires social meaning. As a result there was a shift toward gender history. In 1985 the socialist/feminist *History Workshop Journal* carried an editorial arguing that women's history was becoming ghettoized; now was the time to declare 'a feminist commitment to reconstructing the history of men as a social group and gender category' in order to rewrite the historical record in toto.

But if gender history is the way forward, what exactly is it a history of? The question, apparently simple-minded, has proved to be anything but. The challenge to any common-sense notion of its meaning has come not only from poststructuralism, with its radical critique of 'women' and 'men' as cultural fictions, but also from psychoanalytic perspectives. These are increasingly influential within feminist philosophy and literary theory, and are now taking hold in historical work as well. Freud's famous argument that women are not born but made – that it is through unconscious processes that a little girl born with no psychological gender becomes subjectively female – has prompted many

An anti-dowry dance in India. The spread of women's history has expanded its perception of colour and class.

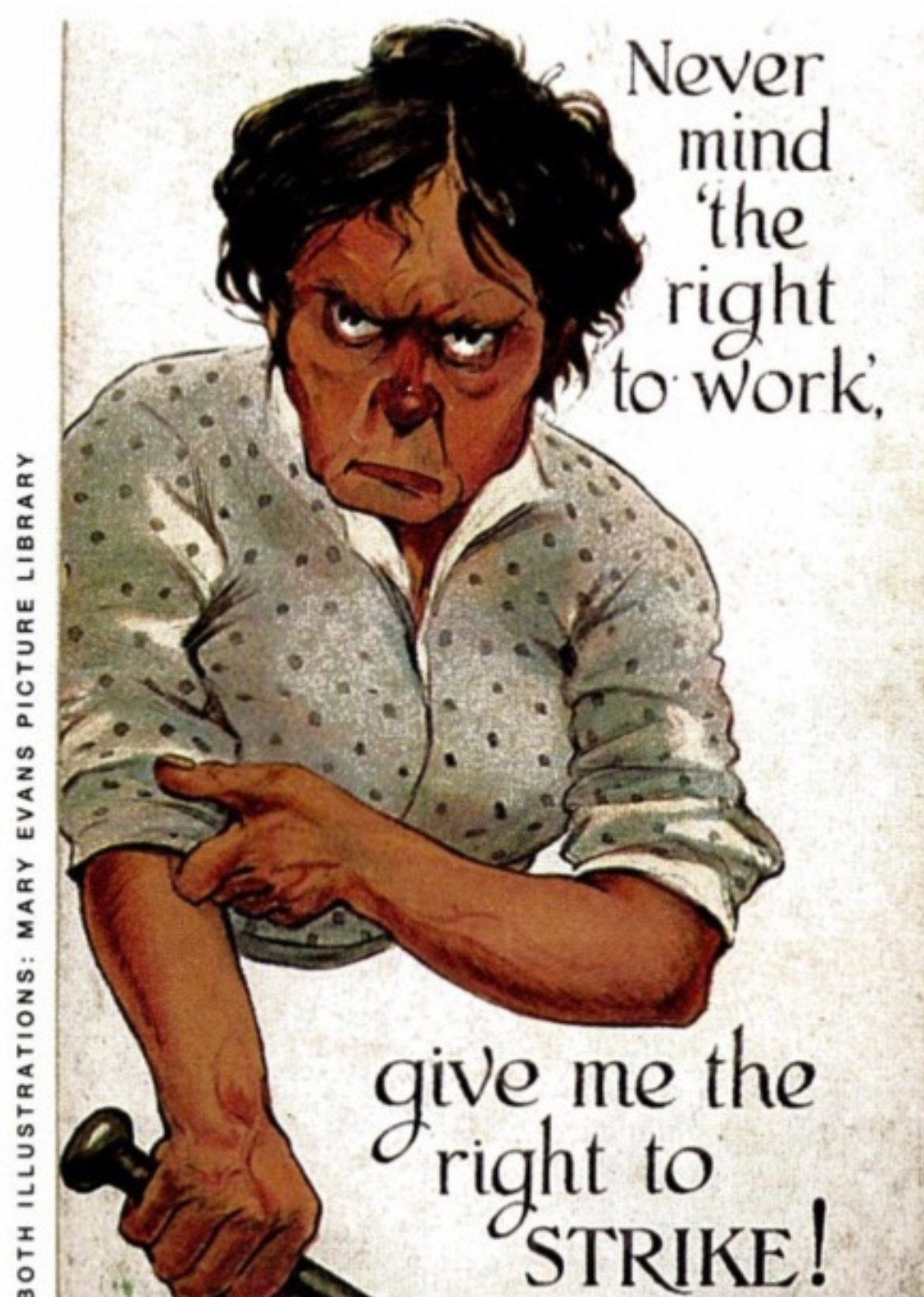


RAISSA PAGE / FORMAT

feminists to explore the unconscious dimensions of gender.

Where post-structuralist theorists tend to place most emphasis on the assignment of gender positions by symbolic codes, psychoanalytic feminists stress the role of unconscious fantasy in the formation of feminine selfhood and social identity. Whether this formative process is pre-mapped in certain respects by the realities of biology is a continuing source of controversy. In a recent article Sally Alexander describes work being done in England, Germany, Italy and America by feminist historians who are applying psychodynamic concepts of inner reality and subjectivity in their research.⁵

Lyndal Roper is currently writing a



BOTH ILLUSTRATIONS: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

history of witchcraft in which she is using psychoanalytic arguments about fantasy and psychopathology to interpret the place of magic and diabolism in sixteenth-century women's lives. And my own work on the history of feminism now employs the psychoanalytic theory of identification as a way of interpreting the fantasies of gender which underlay the early feminist project.

These are new theoretical challenges to conventional views of gender, and of history. But the impulse behind the interrogation of the concept of 'woman' is not just theoretical. For if womanhood is not (only) a biological category but also a cultural and historical one, what does this mean for a politics of 'women's' liberation? Whose liberation? In the struggles for women's emancipation, who has counted as 'women'?

Second-wave feminism originated in the Anglo-American white middle-class,



still its heartland; it has embraced an ethos of universal female suffering and struggle which has masked its specific class, ethnic and national provenance – and also the sexual orientation of most of its proponents, since until the 1970s feminism was largely heterosexual. Probably the most significant challenge facing all styles of feminism today is to this notion of a single female identity, to a concept of universal womanhood which subtly blurs lines of difference and in so doing obscures real divisions of privilege and power.

Black women, lesbian women, women from working-class backgrounds or from imperialized nations: all have been asserting the specificity of their historical experience and making new demands on the intellectual and political fabric of feminism, re-weaving it as a cloth of many colours. With their strong emergence into the historical field, there comes once again a phase of reassessment and rethinking; a time of transformation in the present which is forcing new examinations of the past.

Women's history has left the age of innocence: moving toward the twenty-first century, it is simultaneously more powerful and vexed, more challenged and challenging, than any of us, back in 1969, could have imagined possible. ■

Barbara Taylor is the author of the award-winning *Eve and the New Jerusalem*.

¹ *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, K. Offen, R. Pierson, J. Rendall (eds), London 1991. ² Alan Graebner, quoted in *Liberating Women's History*, B. A. Carroll (ed), Chicago 1976. ³ Anna Davin, 'Women and History', in *The Body Politic: Women's Liberation in Britain 1969-72*, M. Wandor (ed), London 1972. ⁴ *Am I that Name: Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History*, Denise Riley, London 1988. ⁵ Sally Alexander, 'Feminist History' in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, E. Wright (ed), Oxford 1992.

WORTH READING ON HISTORY

The Death of the Past by JH Plumb (Macmillan, London 1967) is one of the best overviews of history. This series of essays by the liberal historian is a delight – erudite learning set forth in readable prose with passion and insight. Plumb examines the lens through which previous societies viewed the past in order to justify their own present and hopes for a more democratic history.

Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness by Frederick Turner (New York, Viking Press, 1980) is a masterpiece of historical sweep that chronicles the way in which human beings and their natural surroundings have been moulded in the image of Western mythologies.

Communalism: from its Origins to the Twentieth Century by Kenneth Rexworth (Seabury Press, New York 1974). An unsung classic by a self-taught scholar and poet from San Francisco. A fascinating exploration through the ages of communal resistance to the aggressions of the state and to materialistic individualism.

History, Classes and Nation States: Selected Writings of Victor Kiernan edited by Harvey J Kaye (Polity Press 1988). Kiernan exemplifies what is best in Marxist historiography: great breadth of learning combined with creative insight and political purpose.

In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time by Calvin Luther Martin (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Another thought-provoking look at the hammerlock our sense of history has on human imagination and possibility and how it has distorted our obligation to the eco-system that gives us life.



History Workshop (available through the Journals Department of Oxford University Press). This British-based journal of social and gender history has very high-quality work even if it slips into studies too detailed for the casual reader. An important source for those interested in new approaches to historical study.

Radical History Review. The US equivalent of History Workshop, available through Cambridge University Press. Somewhat more readable and eclectic than Workshop and a good reference for current issues in the politics of history-writing.

KURDISTAN

Anfal widows

Saddam's genocide

ANFAL is a term from the Qu'ran which refers to the spoils of a war against non-believers. It was used by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to justify genocidal assaults on the Kurds, who are also Muslim. His *Anfal* campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan killed as many as 180,000 people – mostly males – in 1988. Since the Gulf War and the suppression of the Kurdish uprising that followed, Saddam has imposed a strict economic blockade on the region. UN sanctions are still in force against the whole of Iraq. The result is widespread suffering among the dispossessed women and children who remain. But they are developing new ways of coping.

Teresa Thornhill

For more information on **Zinan** contact Brenda Prince, Format Partners, 19 Arlington Way, London EC1R 1UY, UK.



Right: They collect firewood for heating and cooking, risking injury from the thousands of land mines that litter the region.



Left: Zinan is a Kurdish women's organization set up three years ago by a group of women from Suleymaniyah. It runs training workshops for the widows, teaching them to weave rugs, make clothes and paper flowers, providing them with equipment and raw materials as well as help with selling their produce.



Left: Most of the women are aged between 20 and 30 and have as many as five children for whom they must provide.



Rank, file and HIV

The Singapore government has given an altogether new twist to HIV discrimination. It has introduced compulsory testing for its 300,000-odd foreign workers. Anyone who tests positive will have to leave the country. Foreign executives, however, can count among their perks an exemption from this requirement.

from Populi, Vol 20, No 4

Fly-by-night

They disappear in the dead of night, leaving behind empty homes and even their relatives. Usually young, they flee because they have run up astronomical debts through the use of multiple credit cards. The *yonige* or 'night-flight people' are increasingly common in Japan. Often the credit-card firms make little effort to find them because of the high costs of tracking them down and the large numbers involved. An industry has sprung up to serve the absconders – the *yonige-ya*, or 'night-flight' furniture removal company. They have been known to disguise their trucks with spray-paint and even to use decoys to confuse any would-be followers.

from World Press Review, Vol 40, No 6

Left: Many men 'disappeared', leaving some towns and villages in Kurdistan populated almost entirely by *Anfal* widows. As rural workers, now without land, they lack marketable skills or any means of support.



SOUTH AFRICA

Boycotts and balaclavas

Squatter settlements wait for change

IN South Africa's renewed turmoil after the murder of Communist Party leader Chris Hani last April the squatter settlements are once again in the limelight. It is estimated that about seven million blacks live in these crowded, often desolate strips of land; crucibles of anger, fear and hope which act as gauges of the country's political temperature.

Khayelitsha, in Cape Town, is one of the largest. Lying on the windswept Cape Flats to the east of the city, it is home to some 700,000 people, mainly Africans from the 'homelands' of Transkei and Ciskei.

'They leave to find work or because they have family here,' says Freddie, an ANC organizer. 'But they come to Cape Town now because there is no Inkatha here [Zulu Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party]. Around Durban and Johannesburg, where the other big squatter places are, there is always fighting between ANC and Inkatha.'

But Hani's death and the painfully slow negotiations between the ANC, the ruling Nationalists and the other interested parties are sapping the patience of people in Khayelitsha. There is a constant security-force presence, with soldiers or police patrolling in riot gear, toting automatic rifles.

'People sadly accept their presence because they don't know what else to do,' explains Freddie. 'But they are not there to protect blacks: instead they promote violence.'

Hilda Sithole, an ANC Women's League organizer in Khayelitsha, bears this out. Her husband, leader of the local civic organization, was killed last year allegedly by



Crucibles of anger, fear and hope, squatter settlements around Cape Town are swept by insecurity.

'Balaclavas' – hooded black men carrying out the security forces' dirty work.

'He was killed because the authorities said he urged people not to pay their rents,' she said. Rents are about 27 rand (\$10) per month, but nobody pays them. The boycott is part of the general protest about the appalling housing conditions. Hilda's shack has cardboard walls and a rusting corrugated tin roof through which the lashing winter rain easily penetrates. 'We do have toilets and a standpipe now,' she says. 'But we won't pay rent until we have proper brick houses.'

Poor housing is just one of the problems for the squatters. Another is the lack of jobs. Less than half the inhabitants have regular paid work, in textile and other factories, in the harbour, as domestics or seasonal workers on the fruit and wine farms inland. Others hustle on the street, buying and selling veg-

etables or cheap meat like tripe – or drugs. Many young people of Cape Flats are reported to be addicted to the narcotic Mandrax.

The ANC, if it becomes the majority in the new government, will be unlikely to fulfil the very high expectations of its supporters in the squatter areas. Their list of needs is long: jobs and weatherproof brick houses, decent schools and clinics, sanitation and electricity. Delivering them fast enough will be difficult for any government inheriting apartheid's lopsided legacy of preferential treatment for whites.

Troth Wells

Going under in China

China's plans to build the largest hydropower plant in the world at Three Gorges on the Yangtze River would flood six counties and displace 1.2 million people. Told to make way for the project, Chinese citizens have been denied the right to speak out against or write negatively about the project.

The most fertile land in the valley would be lost to the reservoir and if people cannot be resettled within the region, the Government could deport them to distant areas. The Canadian dam builders found that the Chinese Government overestimated the land available for resettlement by 50 per cent.

Of the 10 million people who have been resettled to make way for large dams in China since the 1950s, 30 to 40 per cent are still impoverished and lack adequate food and clothing.

International Rivers Network

Saudi pioneers

A tiny group, both respectable and respectful, has set out to fight for human rights in Saudi Arabia. The Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), with half-a-dozen founding members, wants to draw polite attention to the odd instance when individual human rights are not exactly being catered for. Punishment has been swift. The founding members lost their jobs. The CDLR's spokesman was arrested and whisked away. One of the founders, a religious radical who believes that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is too permissive and who had been co-opted in the hope that his presence would protect the others, was persuaded by the authorities to disassociate himself from the whole affair. Supporters are finding themselves questioned and cautioned. Yet the Committee bravely lives on, preparing reports on the judicial system and political detainees.

from The Economist, Vol 327, No 7815

The feeling you get

In Nicaragua Coca-Cola has been hard at it to push back PepsiCo, its biggest rival. A contest offered a cash prize of about \$8,250 to people with a certain number printed inside a Coke bottle cap. After a newspaper misprinted the winning number, about 3,000 people tried to claim the cash. Hundreds of would-be winners mobbed a bottling plant and threatened to burn it down. Coca-Cola has refused to pay and the case will probably end up in court. Meanwhile, many angry Nicaraguans are boycotting Coke.

from World Press Review, Vol 40, No 6



FOOTPRINTS

Easi Pee comfort

In Bangkok traffic congestion is so dire that most petrol stations now stock 'Comfort 100', a red plastic bottle which is being sold as a portable urinal. It has an optional cone-shaped funnel for the use of female motorists. Competition has arrived from abroad. A Taiwanese device called 'Easi Pee' is advertised as ideal for children. And from Japan comes a more unwieldy piece of equipment, the ominously titled 'Thunderbox'.

from The Economist, Vol 327, No 7815

Just three snags

In a new scheme designed to discourage infanticide and encourage parents to have girl children, 2,000 rupees (about \$64.50) will be deposited for 20 years in an account in the name of new-born girls. After 20 years the deposit should have grown to 20,000 rupees. There are, however, three conditions attached to the plan announced by the female Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayaram Jayalalitha. One parent must be sterilized before the age of 35; there should already be one or two daughters and no sons; and the family must be living below the poverty line.

Atiya Singh / Gemini



ALAN HUGHES

Sewn-up women

In the countries of South Asia women are increasingly leaving their traditional work at home or in the fields to join the labour market. But it's difficult to avoid the trap of low-paying jobs with limited skills.

In Sri Lanka, 99.8 per cent of the women in vocational training centres are enrolled in sewing classes.

Although they have equal access to general education and training programmes, they tend to be channelled into a few 'acceptable' occupations.

In Bangladesh over the last decade the number of women in the workforce has risen by 7.5 per cent each year, but women's enrolment in vocational training institutes and technical centres is only one to two per cent.

from World of Work, June 1993

CENTRAL AMERICA



DAVID RANSOM

Mending the mind: Marta Adriana Peralta (left) works with polarized groups in northern Nicaragua, while Dr Clara Almanza (right) can't change a culture of violence overnight.

Peaceful measures

Healing the wounds in Nicaragua and El Salvador

THE emotional wounds of conflict are often more enduring and harder to heal than the physical ones. Two very different women in Central America have the peculiar brand of optimism needed to make long-term plans for recovery and reconciliation in a region where brutal conflict has been the norm for a generation.

Marta Adriana Peralta promotes mental health in northern Nicaragua, where human rights have been 'suspended' in conditions of continuing insecurity. This was one of the worst-affected regions during the years of conflict between the Sandinista government and the US-sponsored 'Contra' guerilla opposition. Here, she says, 'firearms are the only things many people possess, the only currency with which to buy the basic necessities of life'. Armed rivalries run through families, between brothers and sisters, parents and children, leaving physical injury, bereavement and trauma on both sides. Politics and families alike have become 'polarized'.

Marta works with war orphans and repatriated 'Contra' soldiers. Boys who were teenagers during the conflict have reached their mid-twenties with no experience of peace and few of the skills to benefit from it. Her job, she says, is to equip them for reconstruction: 'we're all fighting against the same things now - hunger, unemployment, violence'.

She is, however, dismissive of the authorities. The Government, she says, has betrayed its promise to bring economic regeneration to the region. 'The people vegetate because they lack the means to live. And the right-wing hierarchy of the Church has failed to put out a plea for reconciliation, love and social

justice. The people are confused.'

Dr Clara Almanza works with the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN), the main guerilla opposition group in El Salvador, which has now become a registered political party following peace accords in January this year. There are some 8,530 soldiers being demobilized, who live in 64 different camps near centres of population around the country. Her job is to promote health - including mental health - in the camps and with all the victims of violence, including relatives, orphans and disabled people.

The peace accords are, she says, only a beginning: 'Years and years of a particular, violent way of life don't change just because agreements have been signed by political leaders. You can't change a culture of violence overnight. But if you recognize it for what it is, you can at least make a start.'

David Ransom

END

END
Quote

I come from a land
From a faraway place,
Where the caravan camels roam.
Where they cut off your ear
If they don't like your face.
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.

Culturally-sensitive lyrics from 'Arabian Nights', a song in Walt Disney's latest animation hit - *Aladdin*.



Confusion reigns, sexual and otherwise, in *The Wedding Banquet*.



The Wedding Banquet

directed by Ang Lee

Mistaken identity is one of the oldest plots around which to build a comedy. But Taiwanese filmmaker Ang Lee puts a new spin on the theme in his bitter-sweet film *The Wedding Banquet*. The mistake here concerns the sexual identity of Wai-Tung Gao. Young and handsome, Wai-Tung has a lot to be happy about. A property investor on the up in his adopted city of New York, he has created a very particular lifestyle for himself which is far removed from that of his family back in Taiwan. For Wai-Tung is gay and enjoys the openness of his relationship with his white boyfriend Simon.

His mother, worried that their only child isn't married yet, sends him computer-dating questionnaires hoping to fix him up with the girl of her dreams. In a bid to stop her constant badgering Wai-Tung arranges to marry Wei-Wei, a Chinese artist friend who needs to get her Green Card. But Wai-Tung hasn't bargained for his parents flying 10,000 miles to watch him get hitched while Simon stands by as best man.

Ang Lee's second feature deservedly won the best film prize at this year's Berlin Film Festival. It relishes the brusque farce of the situation but also allows for some pertinent comments about how a traditionalist Taiwanese family must come to terms with the desires and lifestyles of the younger generation. For the Gaos the marriage of Wai-Tung and Wei-Wei is symbolic of the union between Taiwan and China. This is particularly meaningful for Mr Gao, a

former nationalist general who fled the mainland after his entire family had been killed by the communists. He is concerned with the continuation of the family name which, of course, necessitates the birth of a grandson.

Wai-Tung meanwhile is sympathetic towards his father's concerns, though he is not prepared to come up with the goods. And Ang Lee treats all his characters with such generosity and warmth that he affords us the broadest understanding of their dilemmas.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆



Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz

by Don Byron (*Elektra Nonesuch*)

Maramaros

by Muzsikás (*Hannibal/Rykodisc*)

'American pop,' writes jazz clarinetist Don Byron in the sleeve notes to his jazzed-up klezmer album, 'has always been a barometer of social change.' From African-American jazz and blues to rock'n'roll, the American pop tendency has been towards a pluralist, harmonious state where cadences – like national origins – become an assimilated whole.

Fast, sonorous and emotive, klezmer is the Jewish music of pre-War eastern Europe. On the face of it, klezmer is an odd entity to find in the hands of Byron, a dreadlocked black musician whose fame lies in a series

of virtuoso jazz albums. And yet, thinking about jazz and its ability to assimilate diverse forms, Byron's album makes perfect sense. It is a homage to Mickey Katz who, from the 1940s onwards, used klezmer to play about in the space that separated America's immigrant population from the WASPish dominant class. Songs like *Haim Afen Range* (read 'Home On The Range'), the Latin horns of *Dreidel Song* and the mandolins of *Paisach in Portugal* are, for all their exuberant burlesque, underpinned by a serious question: what is it to be an American? Elegantly rephrased by Byron, the question is no less pertinent today.

Politics ☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆

Hungary's Muzsikás group started with a very different brief. After playing at a photographic exhibition about the lives of religious Jews, Mihaly Sipo and his three Muzsikás cohorts began investigating the threads that linked klezmer to native Hungarian and Gypsy folk music.

In doing so they were following in a grand old (eastern) European tradition – classical composers like Bartók, and more recently Kodály, had made similar excursions into folk and Gypsy music. Their field trips around the Transylvanian Maramaros region have resulted in a vivacious, captivating recording whose 14 tracks range from Hassidic wedding dances to lamentation songs. Folk singer Márta Sebestyén's unaccompanied song *Farewell to Shabbat* is alone enough to melt most hearts.

Both Byron and Muzsikás aim to reclaim music that was, through an interplay of time, fashion and anti-semitism, in danger of falling out of memory. We are all aware of the resurgence of virulent racism in Europe. In stressing the inter-relatedness of Jewish music to folk – and, for that matter, jazz – these records have a cogent point to them.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆



books

Pioneers of Change

by Jeremy Seabrook (*Zed*)

After all the debate about 'the end of history', it is refreshing to have this reminder that we actually could be approaching the beginning of history. There is a growing realization, as one of the visionaries in this book puts it, that 'however different the problems of North and South appear, they derive to a considerable degree from the same root cause: the absence of, or limited space for, genuine democratic participation by citizens'.

After centuries of capitalist disempowerment, spaces for popular initiative are opening up from the sheer need to survive. Thousands of movements everywhere in the world are imagining a different future.

Frances Moore Lappé, from whom the quote above comes, is one of many recipients of the Right Livelihood Award – or the 'alternative Nobel Prize' – who talk to Seabrook in this illuminating book. These people have seen the poor of the earth fighting back. They have witnessed and taken part in an amazing story: completely powerless people recreating semblances of life where international economic forces have sown human misery and ecological destruction. This kind of ingenuity and imagination is rarer in rich countries where almost all spaces for autonomous action have been destroyed by the consumer society.

With centuries-old arrogance Western civilization has claimed universalism for its distorted values. The book's interviewees know from first-hand experience the destructive force of industrial culture. As Anwar Fazal, the founder of Consumer Interpol, says: 'The category of the sufficient is basic in traditional societies. Once you start to measure wealth in cash, then enough ceases to exist, for it cannot be found in the realm of monetized riches.'

This point is made in a different way by John Turner, an expert in self-managed home and neighbourhood building who has witnessed the incredible resilience of slum dwellers in the Third World: 'Hope for the future lies in the fact that so many of the poor in poor countries manage to do so much with so little. While the rich do so little with so much, there can be no future.'

Politics ☆☆☆☆

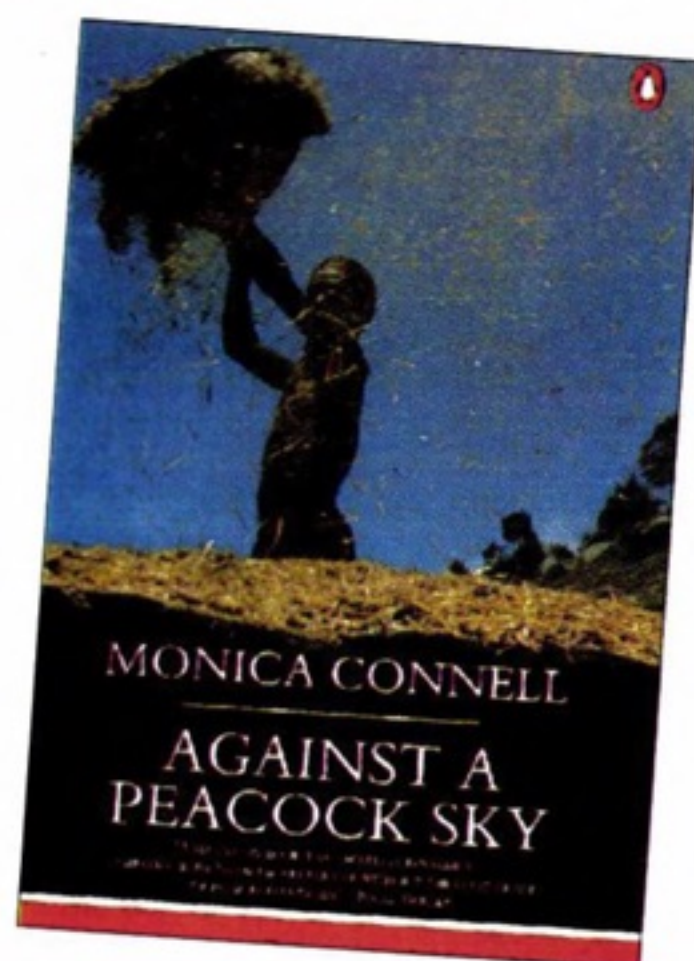
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Against a Peacock Sky

by Monica Connell (Penguin)

The familiar problems of anthropology. People swallowed by tape recorders emerging as paragraphs of text. Cultures pinned like exotic butterflies. The imperialism of explanation. And the financially secure anthropologist's place in frugal societies. What kind of justification can the knowledge so gleaned claim?

Monica Connell's awareness of these problems reduces many of them and though her account of her stay in a village in the remote Jumla district of Nepal is finely observed there is nothing in it that is voyeuristic. Her position is always clear – the people she



stays with become her friends and involve her in their rituals and their routines of rice planting and gathering pine needles. Yet she retains her composed outsider's eye, often being 'humbled and then resocialized'.

In prose that is remarkably supple and dispassionate she reveals the seasonal rhythm of the Jumla people's life in a series of vignettes. She refuses to judge or explain away, rendering complex and often troubling situations with equanimity. Curiously this makes you think more and not less about the issues involved... Like how the community carefully harvests pine needles for fuel but has stripped the area near the village of trees. Or when a woman whose baby is ill is told that she is a witch holding her husband under a strange and evil power.

Monica Connell's honesty about events like these is the book's great strength – with it she achieves a rare and luminous empathy.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

STAR RATING

Excellent ★★★★★
Very good ★★★★★
Good ★★★★★
Fair ★★★★★
Poor ★★★★★

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

THE classic

Freud

... being the thinker who mapped the mind.

It's exactly a century since Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer published their 'Preliminary Communication' on hysterical phenomena, a paper which aroused derision in Viennese medical circles. The doctors who thus responded had little time for the patients or the symptoms the paper described, seeing them as either idle malingerers or negligible mental phantoms. This was the earliest in a long series of writings in which Freud maintained a systematic and relentless assault on the pieties of the conventional medical establishment of his day.

Many of Freud's most famous treatises, when superficially examined, appear to be monuments to the most trivial aspects of human life. For example, within one five-year period (1900-1905) he published a book about dreams (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), another about slips of the tongue, mis-spellings and similar matters (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*), and yet another on jokes (*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*). It now requires some effort of imagination to appreciate how outlandish these must have seemed to his fellow professionals, and indeed the book on dreams took an astounding eight years to sell 600 copies. Each of these works is now considered a classic because they formulated wholly original concepts, in effect inventing a language with which to talk about human psychology. They also demonstrate that Freud was as interested in 'normal' minds as in those of the 'mentally ill'.

Everybody knows something about Freud's theories and discoveries. He proposed that many apparently physical illnesses had a psychological root, but that this origin was often too painful for patients to acknowledge. Psychoanalysis, sometimes called 'the talking cure', was the careful and difficult process he perfected for leading patients to the discovery of the source of their illness which, when recognized, usually disappeared. He held that the vast majority of these sources were erotic in nature, and that the psychic regulation of sexual impulses was the single most important factor in human behaviour. He argued that infants have an erotic life and that the family is a formative arena steeped in sexual tension. Human beings consist of an id, an ego and a super-ego. The id consists of those instinctual drives which need to be satisfied if life is to be maintained; the ego is the conscious part of the id which is continually laying the best and most efficient plans to satisfy it; while the super-ego is

the entity which keeps the ego in check by 'reminding' it of the moral and physical restraints placed on its activities by the existence of others.

The hedonism underlying Freud's theories creates obvious problems for any egalitarian politics. When considered on a collective scale, his has been called a 'regulated free market' model of social behaviour, in which individual egos 'compete' for their own selfish satisfactions, subject only to the 'regulation' of their super-egos. The raw material for his work was supplied by private consultations with the moneyed classes of Vienna, and by his own self-analysis: it would be hard to find a more solidly *bourgeois* group of subjects, and so the 'free market' model which emerged should perhaps cause no surprises.

Freud's preparedness to universalize from such a limited clientele has rightly encouraged scepticism towards his thinking, which attaches also to his other major omission, namely the failure to consider how much his interpretations and procedures were determined by his own gender.

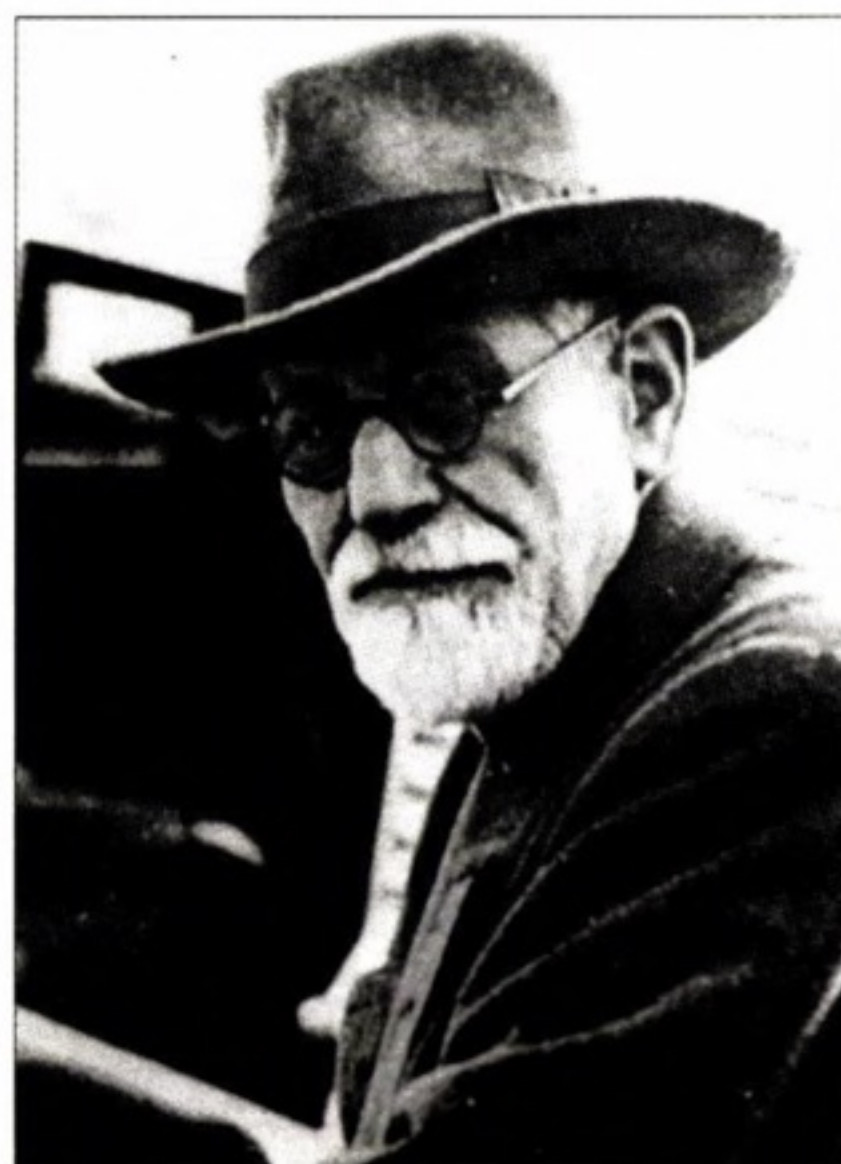
These criticisms admitted, the understanding of psychology which Freud advanced has enormous political potential in allowing us to make sense of sociological and historical phenomena as well as the political psychology of our own societies. Towards the end of his life, in works such

as *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud was trying to apply the insights of his earlier individualist work to society as a whole. In this he was only partially successful, mainly because the political potential of his work is better realized when this procedure is turned around. It may be, in other words, that individual psychology is as much a product of our political culture as the reverse. Many of the technical terms that Freud used to describe mental events – 'repression', 'censorship' – are more familiar to us as words describing political processes. Perhaps, then, individual psychic repression and censorship is more widespread in societies in which these are the administrative norms, leaving people with less pleasure in their lives?

The model of the human mind described by Freud should not be regarded as universal, timeless, natural or unalterable. Our political culture and our mental dynamics are intimately related. That is a liberating insight, and, whatever his other blind spots, we ought to applaud the courage of the Viennese doctor who made it possible. ■

Macdonald Daly

Freud's work is summarized in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917) and *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933) – both are published by Penguin.





QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.

Is the story of Elzeard Bouffin – the 'man who planted trees' in the Alps – true? Or was it invented to encourage replanting in that area?

● According to the 'Afterword' in my edition of Jean Giono's *The Man Who Planted Trees* the author 'seems to have intended to inspire



a reforestation programme that would renew the whole earth. His history of this imaginary shepherd calmly veers away from past and present time toward the future of newer and better generations. Giono termed this confidence in the future *espérance*, or hopefulness – not *espoir*, which is the masculine word for hope, but *espérance*, the feminine word designating the permanent state or condition of living one's life in hopeful tranquillity.'

G Roux
Oxford, UK

Is it true that the ceremony of Pope-making involves touching of the testicles? If so, why?

● What a load of rubbish! Obviously checking the suitability of a candidate for ordination in the Catholic Church would have been carried out before the first of the Major Orders. It's a bit late in the day to leave it until after a candidate had become a bishop.

As to the story of Pope Joan (*Curiosities* NI 244): Pope Leo IV died on 17 July 855 and his successor Benedict II was elected on 29 September of the same year, so there

would have been no space for the reign of the mythical Pope Joan.

David Sherwell
Manchester, UK

● It is quite false to say that the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* accepts the Pope Joan story (*Curiosities* NI 244). I have consulted both the present edition and the former one and I find that it reports the story and concludes it is a medieval legend of no historical value – a view shared by the *Dictionary of the Popes*, not a Catholic publication.

As regards the extremely offensive section on the 'special chair': there was a seat near the Cathedral, one of many to be found in Rome, on which the newly elected pope rested after the procession.

John Thorn
London, UK

● I think the questioner is confused. In the imperial periods of pre-Christian Rome only adult males were regarded as fit to give evidence in courts of law. Proof of adult manhood had to be displayed to the prosecutors or their representatives. The word 'testicle' derives from the Latin testiculum which means – literally – 'a little witness'.

Brian Craib
Fife, Scotland

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

I have recently tried gunpowder tea which is a delicious, traditional, green tea, steamed and rolled in balls. Can anyone tell me if it is rolled by hand and, if so, who does it and are there any health risks incurred? And finally, is this tea machine- or sun-dried?

S Hills
London, UK

I suspect that cannibalism is a racist myth. Did Idi Amin have to eat people other than for the benefit of our tabloid press? Can anyone provide me with evidence of cannibalism – either way?

David Williams
Camberley, UK

I am a Canadian residing in Aotearoa/New Zealand and would like to know why people from the UK are referred to here as Poms. Does anyone know the origins of the term?

Janice Travett
Palmerston North, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Does anyone know the origin of the idea that a stork brings a new baby? Why should storks be associated with childbirth?

Mary Morgans
Ainsdale, UK

If you have any questions or answers please send them to *Curiosities*, **New Internationalist**, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



OLD WORLD ORDER



NEW WORLD ORDER



A skin of her own

*Bessie Head's origins were a mystery – even to herself.
Now researcher Gillian Stead Eilersen has uncovered the strange, poignant and
deeply symbolic history of one of South Africa's most famous writers.*

WHEN she died in 1986, all that Bessie Head knew about her roots was that her mother (who was white), returning to her family home after an unsuccessful marriage, became pregnant by a stable hand (who was black) and produced a girl child whom she named after herself. These events took place in the racially divided South Africa of the late 1930s and Bessie Head's subsequent achievements as a writer are generally seen as being connected with her need to understand and accept them.

In an article in *Drum* magazine in 1982, she said that the circumstances of her birth 'seem to have made it necessary to obliterate all traces of family history... I have always been just me with no frame of reference to anything beyond myself.' During a visit to Australia in 1984 she said: 'I just don't fit in or belong anywhere and I tend to pride myself on not fitting in or belonging'.

This suggests that she had reconciled herself to her state. However, her writings illustrate instead her struggle to establish a personal sense of identity and with that a sense of history. She once wrote: 'A sense of history was totally absent in me... We black Africans did not know who or what we were, apart from objects of abuse and exploitation.'

After the publication of *A Bewitched Crossroad* in 1984, her next project was to be an autobiography. But she had got no closer to finding the truth about her family background when she died two years later – that has been for others to discover.

Bessie Amelia Head's story can be said to have begun in Johannesburg in 1919. In that year Bessie Amelia Emery, a young white woman from a large and wealthy family of English immigrants, was involved in a tragic event. Her elder son, Stanley, aged four, was struck by a speeding car outside the family home. Hearing the screech of brakes and a child's scream, she was the one who gathered the broken body from the road: 'Neck broken, legs broken, head smashed', reported *The Star*.

Minds crack, they say, and Stanley's violent death before her very eyes was more than Bessie Emery's mind could bear. Her marriage to her athlete husband, Ira, gradually disintegrated. He was as distraught as she was over the loss of their son. But he blamed her for it. He finally left her in 1928 and they were divorced the following year. Bessie Emery was given custody of their remaining son, Ronald, then 10.

Ever since the accident Bessie Emery had been showing signs of mental instability, but after the divorce her state deteriorated so noticeably that she had to be admitted to the Pretoria Mental Hospital in 1933. On her release, three years later, she made her will, leaving everything to her son Ronald. The solicitor considered her to be 'perfectly normal' at that stage. Shortly afterwards she must have become pregnant. She was 42 years old.

It had been decided that she should spend an extended holiday by the sea with two sisters who had moved to Durban. She had put on weight with the years and no-one considered her rounded shape too round until May 1937, when she was once more admitted to psychiatric hospital, this time in Pietermaritzburg. On 6 July she gave birth to a daughter whom she insisted on naming after herself. Thus she built into an event, soon to be covered in secrecy, a code by which the mystery would be solved 53 years later.

The baby, who is classified 'white' on her birth certificate, was adopted by a white family. Shortly afterwards she was returned

because she looked 'strange'. Did the delicate little fingernails have a brownish tinge? Were the wispy tots of hair too curly? South Africans have a well trained eye in such matters. Only now did Bessie's clear-minded and strong-willed grandmother, Alice Birch, begin to realize that her new illegitimate granddaughter was of mixed blood. But the name of the father apparently went to the grave with Bessie Emery. There was no talk of his being a stable hand.

Baby Bessie was then placed with a 'coloured' couple, named George and Nellie Heathcote, where she grew up in reasonable security but extreme poverty. Her natural mother did not abandon her entirely, however. She made provisions for her upkeep and for her education. Grandmother Alice also seemed concerned about the child's welfare and visited her on several occasions – so Bessie Head's memories of being embraced by a strange lady with a British accent are accurate. But other members of the family wanted nothing to do with this scandal – in 1937 sexual intercourse between a white and a black person was a punishable offence.

After her daughter's birth Bessie Emery retreated deeper into an unreal world. In 1943 her health suddenly declined and she died of a 'lung abscess' and 'dementia praecox'. Winding up the estate, her son, Ronald, agreed to make a sum of money available to the mysterious half-sister on condition that he would have nothing more to do with her. It seems that at this time Alice Birch also abandoned the child.

At the age of 12 Bessie left George and Nellie Heathcote and was moved to a Children's Home for 'coloured' girls where she was able to complete her education. The decades passed, during which Bessie Head attained fame as a writer. Then in April 1992 – six years after her death – Ronald Emery was contacted by a cousin, Kenneth Birch. The latter had received my letter requesting information about 'the South African writer Bessie Amelia Head (born Emery)'. Birch phoned Ronald and told him: 'I've just had the strangest letter. It refers to a famous South African writer with the same name as your mother.' The men responded to my request, both wishing to recognize this unsettling woman, half-sister and cousin, and to honour her memory.

Bessie Amelia Head inherited none of her grandmother's material wealth and we do not know whether they shared the shape of a fingernail. But she was endowed instead with her grandmother's energy, determination and intelligence; with her sense of the ridiculous and with her stocky little figure. From her mother came her beautiful eyes, square face and artistic sensitivity; perhaps too, her emotional instability. From her father came her hair – and who knows what else. But Bessie Head's golden brown skin was all her own: a living reminder of the need for compromise and her efforts to shape a future of 'dignity and compassion' for her country. Neither her family nor South Africa could use any of this. Bessie Head spent her entire life trying to establish a viable identity for herself. There is no need to draw the many obvious moral conclusions. The parable built into her life should be powerful enough to penetrate the most leathery of 'white' skins. ■

Gillian Stead Eilersen is a South African-born writer and academic whose *People Without Names: a biography of Bessie Head* is currently with publishers.

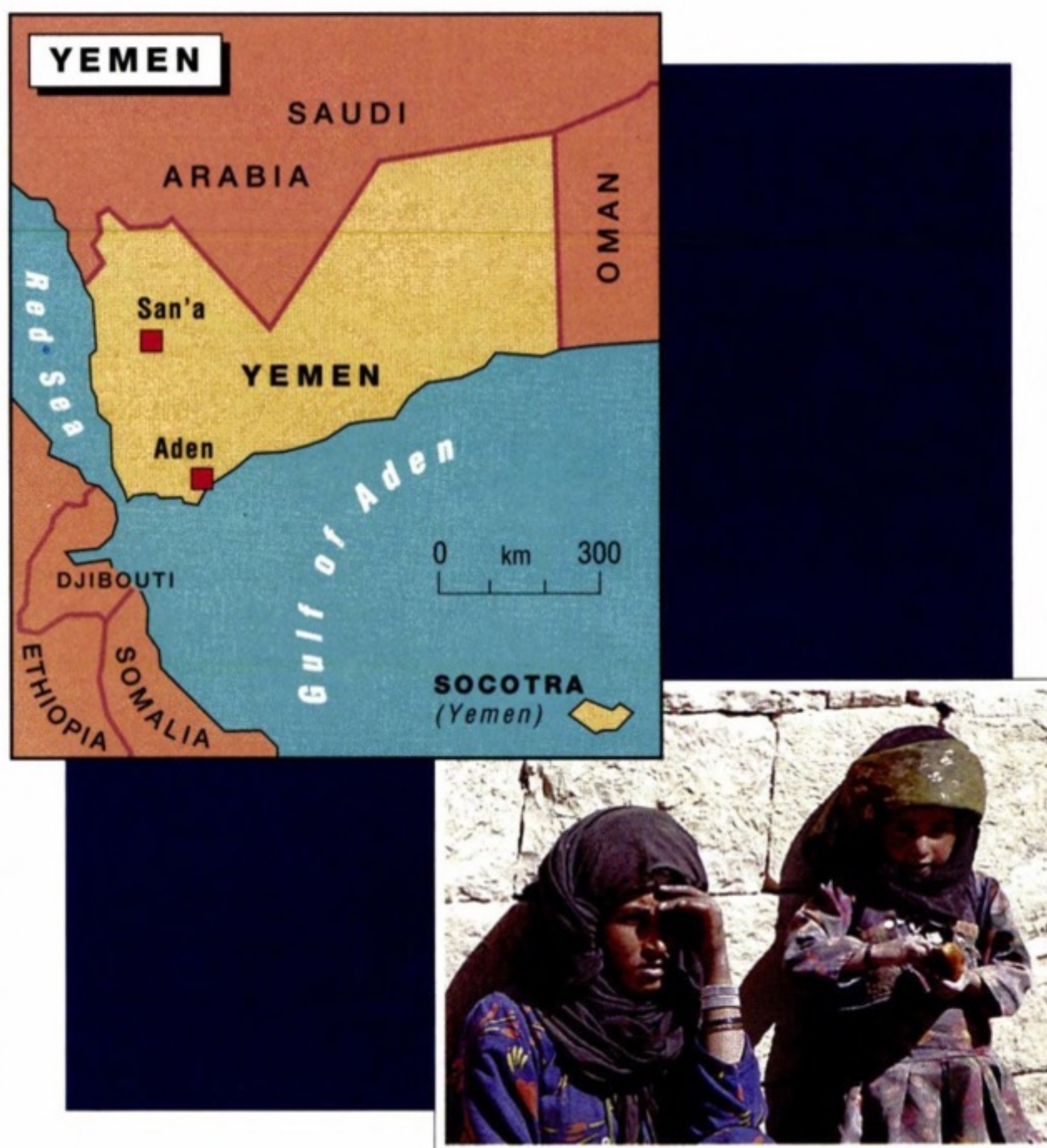


Yemen

THIS ancient realm, rich with incense and alabaster and gold, gave the legendary Queen of Sheba the right to stand before King Solomon as his equal. Almost 3,000 years later, the Yemen is still a land of many gifts, including the independent spirit of its people.

Yemen moved hesitantly out of the medieval period when it threw off despotism in North Yemen in 1962 and colonialism in South Yemen in 1967. But now, thanks to oil and unification, the momentum towards modernization has picked up dramatically. Yemen has climbed from being one of the world's poorest countries to the middle-income bracket. Oil strikes on the border between North and South Yemen pushed forward a long-standing agenda for the unification of the two states. The collapse of Soviet-supported socialism in the south removed the ideological barrier. On 22 May 1990, North and South Yemen reunited as the Republic of Yemen, after a century and a half of artificial separation carved out by the Ottomans and British in the 1830s.

Unification swept away a fiction of history and replaced it with a parcel of impracticalities. Two social norms now co-exist. In the south where socialism



dismantled the strictures of Islam, women today go unveiled, hold jobs on an equal basis and alcohol is for sale. In the north, conservatism reigns and Islamic fundamentalism is on the upsurge. The traditional power base in the Zaydi north is resisting the headlong rush to secularism.

One binding factor is pride that Yemen chose a parliament in multi-party democratic elections on 27 April this year, heartening democratic movements elsewhere in the Arab world.

Throughout Yemen the lucrative *qat* trade continues to flourish. This stimulant leaf chewed by men and women is the largest

household expense, estimated at \$500 per capita annually.

Today, Yemen's fragile ecosystem is severely stressed; water reserves are being depleted by over-extraction and the country is almost irretrievably denuded of woodland.

Efforts to reduce the external debt, which currently stands at \$6,236 million, suffered a calamitous setback during the Gulf War. Although the former North Yemen remained officially neutral there was open sympathy toward Saddam Hussein. As a result, the Gulf States rescinded the visas of more than a million Yemenis, who were repatriated without compensation for goods and businesses. An estimated one billion dollars a year in remittances has been lost. Many of the returnees are still enduring hardship in tent cities on the coastal plain. Western nations penalized Yemen by withdrawing aid.

Yemen is unique in Arabia. Its people evolved a settled civilization at least three millennia ago and terraced a landscape that now supports grain, cotton, fruit, vegetables and coffee. Its independent spirit now sets the pace for democracy in the Arab world.

Francine Stone

AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★

Severe cash-flow problems due to the Gulf War affect all sectors.



SELF-RELIANCE ★★★

Culture of political freedom but imports exceed exports by a factor of three.



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Women may vote and drive. Socializing outside the home is chaperoned. Access to birth control and general health facilities is limited.



POLITICS

Democratically elected parliament with civilian government headed by a General. The People's General Congress party leads a coalition government.



LITERACY ★★

38.6% (53% male, 26% female) but great progress is being made at primary level. Men can teach as a partial substitute for military service.



FREEDOM ★★★

Newly forged press and political freedoms have brought widespread participation in the democratic process. Over 70 journals, over 20 political parties.



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★

52 years (US 76 years). Medical facilities inadequate, water scarce and disease-ridden, malaria endemic, nutrition improving.

Leader President General Ali Abdullah Saleh.
Economy GNP per capita US\$650 per year (1990)

Monetary units: Rial and Dinar.

Main Exports: Oil, coffee, fish & seafood, grapes, oranges, lemons & soft fruits.

Main Imports: Textiles, all high technology/electrical appliances, electronics, medical supplies, cereals, rice.

Debt-service payments 28.4% of export earnings (1989).

Rate of inflation: 47% annually (1991)

People 14 million (UN Census). Population growth is 3.5% per annum.

Health Infant mortality 124 per 1,000 live births (US 9 per 1,000).

Culture Arab majority with some Yemenis of Ethiopian, Indonesian, Turkish and Indian origin.

Religion: Sunni Muslims of the Shafi sect and Shi'a Muslims of the Zaydi sect which is now unique to Yemen. There is also a minority Isma'ili sect in the western highlands and a small Jewish community.

Language: Yemeni Arabic. Mahri and Socotri in isolated areas. English is spoken in commerce and government circles.

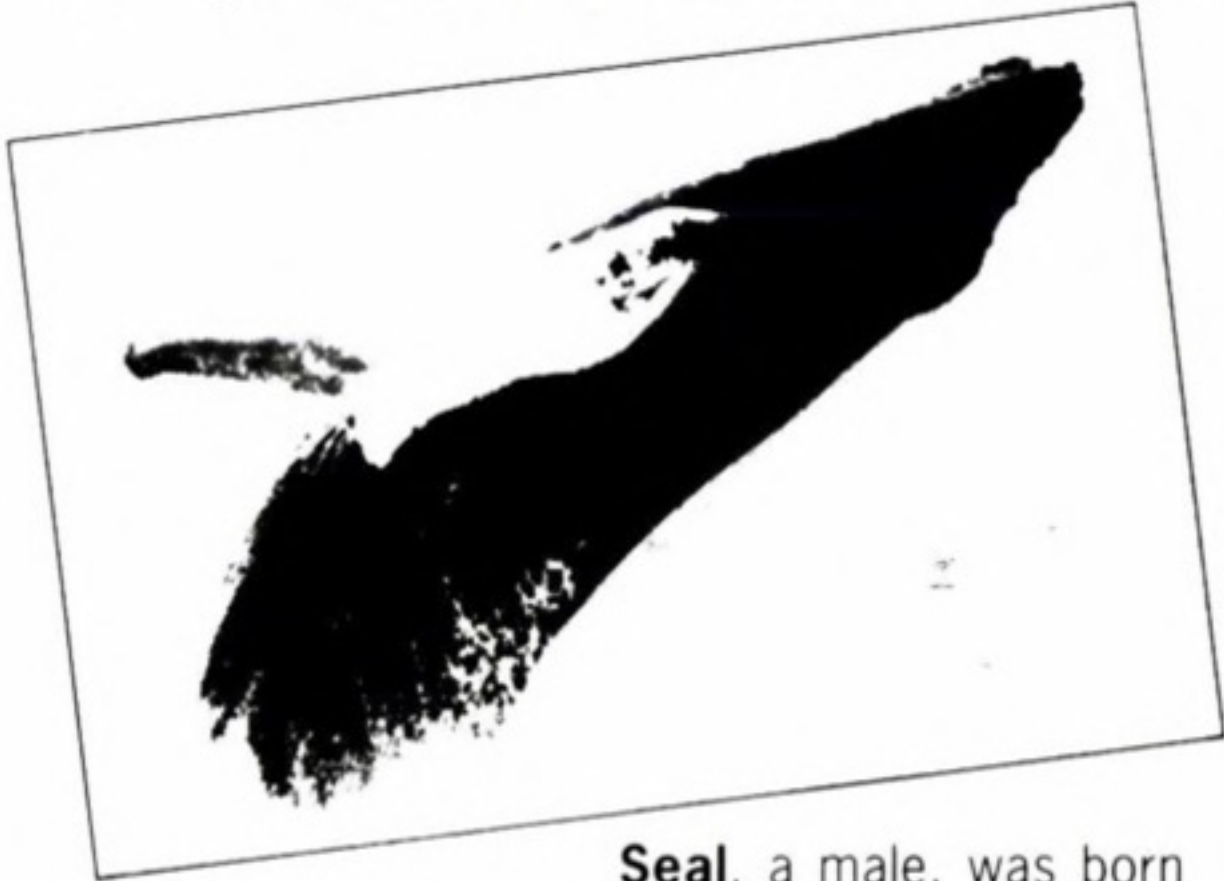
Sources: World Development Report - World Bank 1991 & 1992, Trends in Developing Economies - World Bank 1991, State of the World's Children - UNICEF 1992, 1993/4 Third World Guide - ITeM, Uruguay.

Last profiled separately as Democratic Yemen in July 1981 and North Yemen in December 1983.

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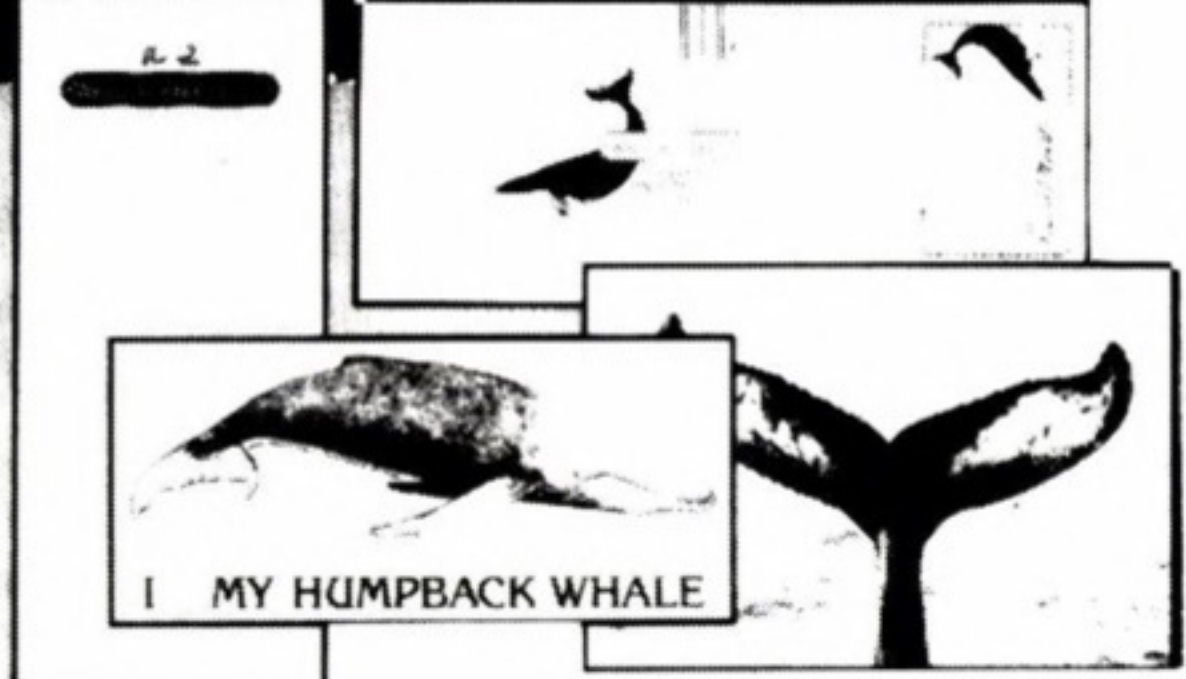
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- A biography of your whale
- A colour 11" x 17" whale calendar and migration map
- A year's subscription to Whalewatch, our



- quarterly newsletter that gives you the latest news about your whale and other marine mammal issues (a children's version is available, too – a super gift.)
- An honorary First Mate card good for discounts on wildlife tours and whale watching trips

Please supply ____ Humpback Whale Adoption Kit(s) at £15 each, this fee also includes the cost of adopting a whale. (Overseas orders please add £3 per Kit for shipping). I enclose a cheque/PO for £ ____

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Address

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Recipient's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Recipient's Address

Postcode Telephone

For extra gifts, attach a separate sheet of paper with all the names and addresses in BLOCK CAPITALS.

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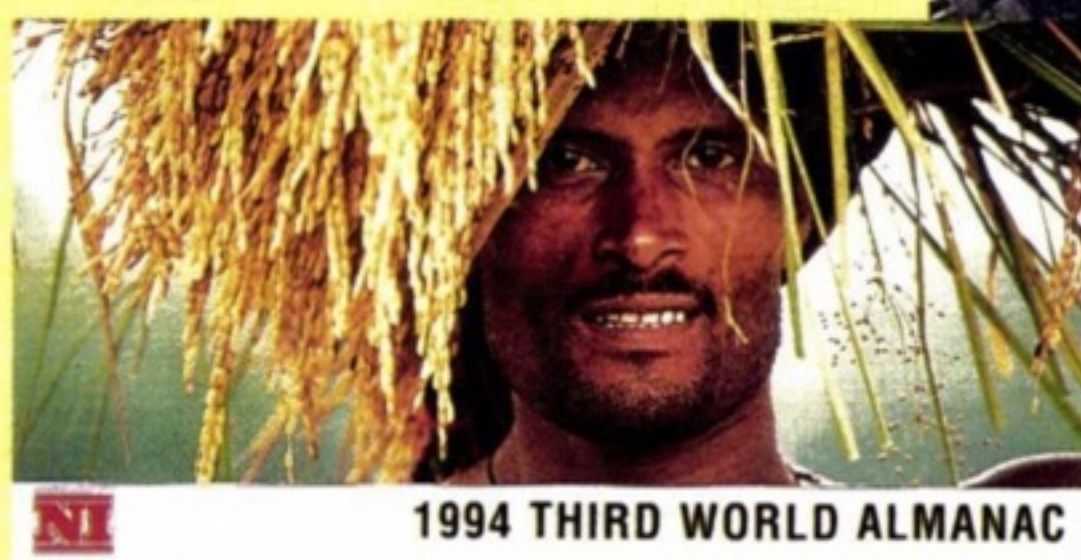
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the NI 1994 THIRD WORLD ALMANAC

QUIRKY, joyful, illuminating, sad: 52 full colour photos, one for every week of the year are found in this photo diary. The week-at-a-glance diary gives plenty of space for listing appointments and the cover opens into a unique triangular presentation for the pages to be propped up to view and to use. Size? At 4 1/2" x 8 1/4" it is comfortable on the desktop or in a bag. Spiral binding ensures the almanac stays open and lies flat for writing. A practical, attractive and distinctive personal organiser.



NI 1994 THIRD WORLD ALMANAC

Other features include:

- weekly quotation to inspire or provoke
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NEW

Every week's photo in full colour



NEW THIS YEAR
Second in series

THE WORLD IN YOUR KITCHEN

VEGETARIAN recipes from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East for Western kitchens, with country information and food facts.

Taste the delights of world vegetarian cooking with the New Internationalist's latest food book – 150 recipes tested and adapted for you to cook easily at home. It's packed with exciting food ideas, many colour photos and fascinating facts.

More than a cook book:

- Over 25 full page colour photos
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- Glossary of ingredients
- Hardback, ribbon marker. 176pp.

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Canadian edition in conjunction with Second Story Press



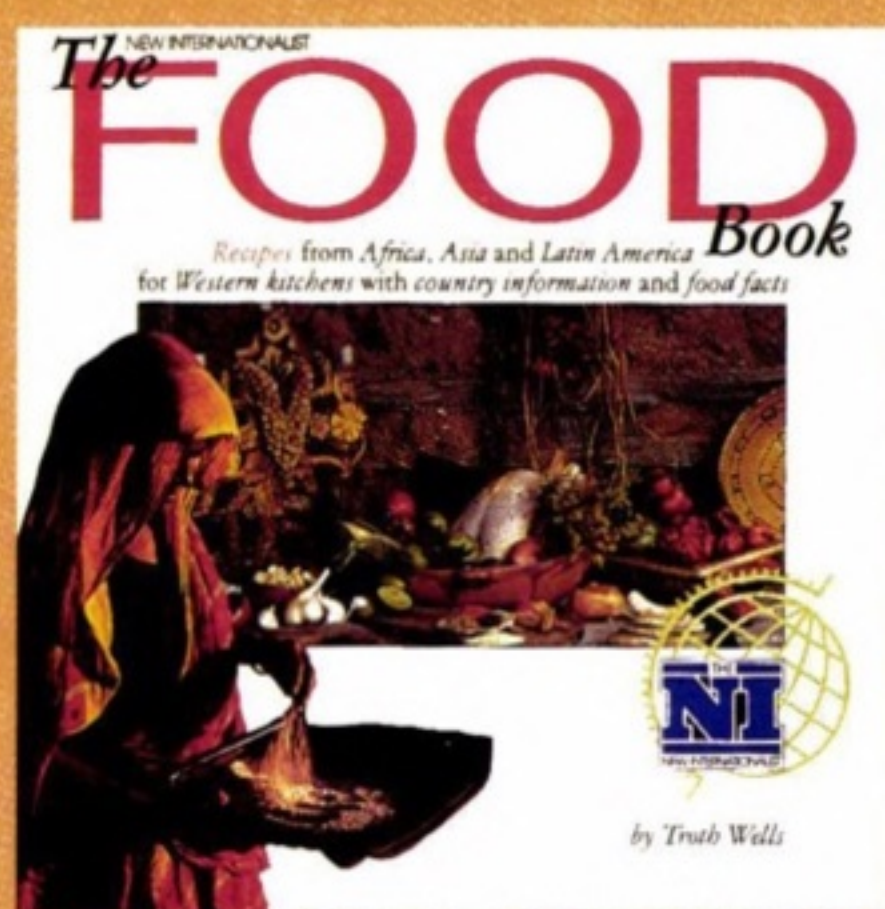
THE NI FOOD BOOK

THIS attractive wipe-clean hardback publication features over 200 easy-to-follow delicious recipes from Africa, Asia and Latin America including sections on meat and fish, starters, salads and desserts, plus country information and food facts. Numerous illustrations and a ribbon marker. With over 25,000 copies already sold, the book has become a best seller with good reason. 184 pp.

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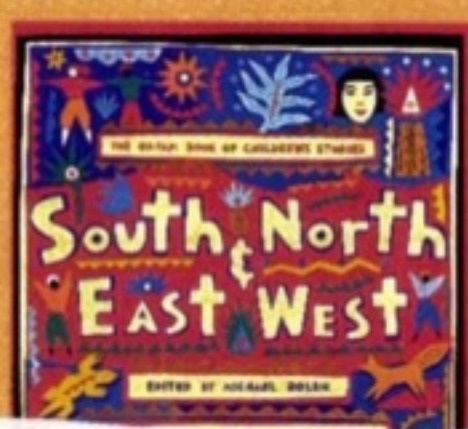
STRIKING sepia photo portraits of nineteenth century Native Americans. Each picture is coupled with an environmental statement which still has resonance today including:

'Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realise that we cannot eat money.'

Cards printed on recycled parchment-style card. Inside blank for your own greeting. Pack of five different cards, each measuring 8 1/4" x 5 3/4" plus envelopes.

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A RAY OF SUNSHINE ... FOR THE NEW YEAR



the 1994 THIRD WORLD CALENDAR

THE NI Third World Calendar is a collection of twelve lovely pictures by some of the world's best photographers. The images show Third World people, their work, their culture and their environment. You'll appreciate the amazing variety of these photographs: from a colourful wash-day on the river bank in India to Chinese opera stars swapping intimacies, from a Moroccan family enjoying the evening air in Marrakesh to the cheerful exuberance of young Waday women fetching water in rural Kenya.

This calendar is a celebration of our one world – to enjoy all the year. It measures 11" x 22" and comes in a sturdy carton ready for mailing to a relative or special friend.

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UK £8.95 ● Can/US \$17.95



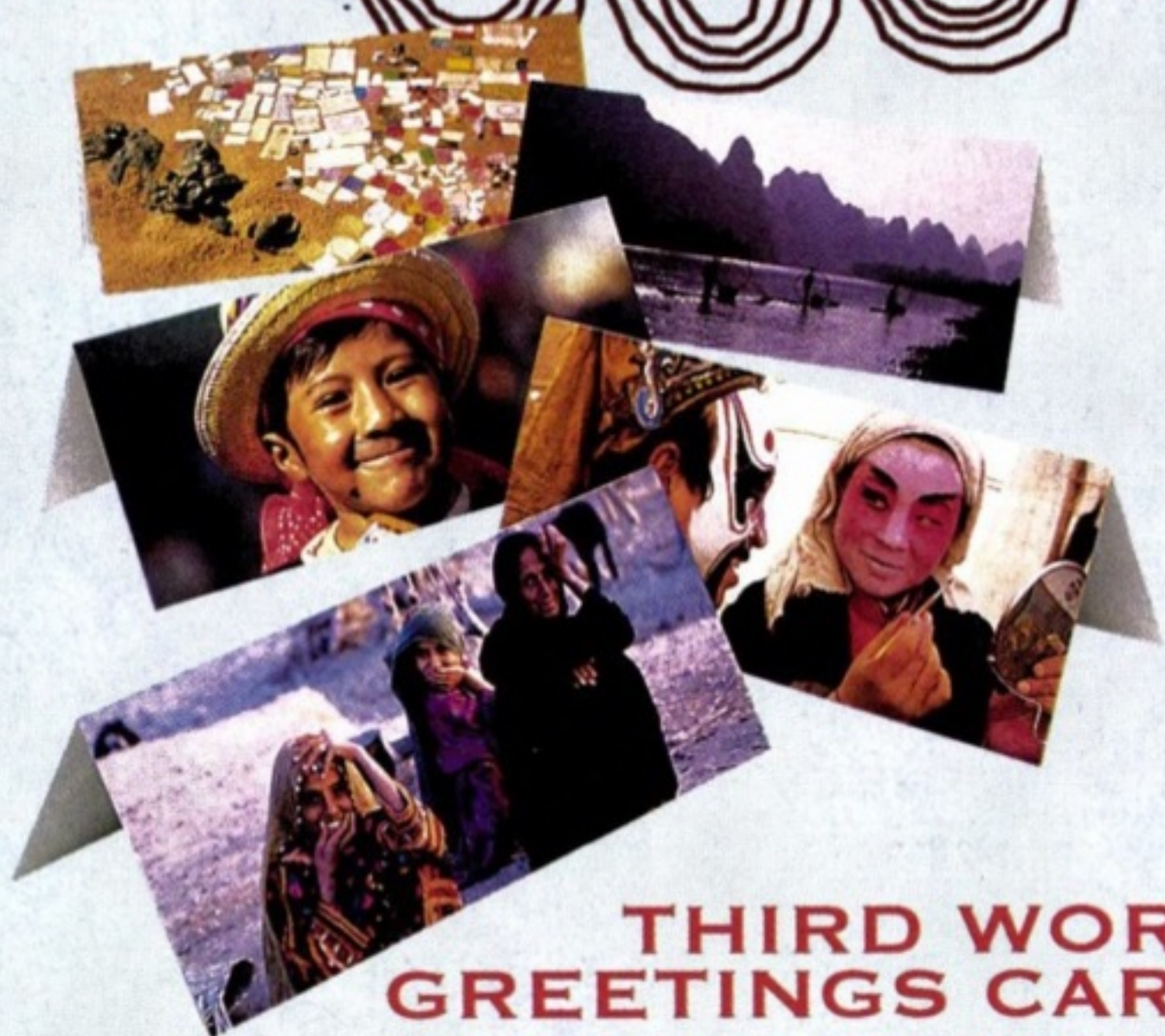
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PICTURE

provides a wealth of stories, facts, charts and illustrations which link-in with the front-side photo.



FREE OFFER

Order three calendars and/or almanacs to be sent to one address and you can have **FREE** a pack of 10 full-colour Third World Greetings Cards.



THIRD WORLD GREETINGS CARDS

TEN full colour cards featuring two of each of the five best calendar photos, plus envelopes in a handy wallet. The cards are blank inside so they are useful for special occasions all the year. They are good value too, cards of this quality normally sell for at least twice as much in regular stores. Each card measures 3 3/4" x 8 1/4".

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THIRD WORLD GUIDE 93/94



THIS excellent reference work is a guide to all the world's nations – but with one distinct difference. It's a detailed global survey written completely from the viewpoint of the nations of the South. A talented team of researchers, journalists and academics based in Uruguay, with contributors from around the globe, have compiled this alternative reference book containing profiles of 173 countries, with supporting diagrams, graphs and maps.

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